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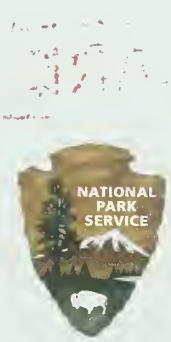
PIPELINE TO RUSSIA

THE ALASKA-SIBERIA AIR ROUTE IN WORLD WAR II

Edited by Alexander B. Dolitsky



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Pipeline to Russia

The Alaska–Siberia Air Route in World War II

Whereas the Governments of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics declare that they are engaged in a cooperative undertaking, together with every other nation or people of like mind, to the end of laying the bases of a just and enduring world peace, securing order under law to themselves and all nations…

— Washington, D.C., June 11, 1942

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Edited by
Alexander B. Dolitsky

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THE STRUCTURE OF WORLD PEACE CANNOT BE THE WORK OF ONE MAN, OR ONE PARTY, OR ONE NATION…IT MUST BE A PEACE WHICH RESTS ON THE COOPERATIVE EFFORT OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

— **Franklin Delano Roosevelt, March 1, 1945**
Address to Congress on the Yalta Conference

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WASP

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USSR Air Force

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Transliteration Table

The system of transliteration adopted in this work is that of the United States Board of Geographic Names, with slight modifications for technical reasons. Instead of **е**, we use ***ye*** at the beginning of names, after vowels, and after the soft sign (**ь**), or ***yo*** (**ё**), where **е** is accented as **ё**. The soft sign (**ь**) and hard sign (**ъ**) have no sound value, but they soften or harden the sound of the letter in front of them. A hard sign (**ъ**) is transliterated when in the middle of a word and disregarded when located at the end of a word.

Russian Letters		Transliteration	
А	*а*	a	(as in st**a**r, c**a**r, **A**rkans**a**s)
Б	*б*	b	(as in **b**oots, **B**ill, **B**ritain)
В	*в*	v	(as in **v**oice, **V**irginia)
Г	*г*	g	(as in **g**o, **g**ood, Michi**g**an)
Д	*д*	d	(as in **d**o, roa**d**, **D**akota)
Е	*е*	ye	(as in **ye**t, **ye**s)
Ё	*ё*	yo	(as in **yo**nder, **Y**ork)
Ж	*ж*	zh	(as in plea**s**ure)
З	*з*	z	(as in **z**oo, i**s**, Kan**s**as)
И	*и*	i	(as in m**ee**t, s**ea**t)
Й	*й*	y	(as in ma**y**, bo**y**)
К	*к*	k	(as in cat, **k**ind, **K**entucky)
Л	*л*	l	(as in be**l**t, **l**ion, **F**lorida)
М	*м*	m	(as in a**m**use, **m**other, **M**exico)
Н	*н*	n	(as in **n**ow, **n**oose, **N**ebraska)
О	*о*	o	(as in p**o**rt, c**o**mb, **O**klahoma)
П	*п*	p	(as in **p**ure, **p**oor, **P**ortland)
Р	*р*	r	(as in **r**iver, t**r**illed, Ari**z**ona)
С	*с*	s	(as in **s**wim, **S**OS, **S**outh)
Т	*т*	t	(as in s**t**ool, **t**iger, **T**exas)
У	*у*	u	(as in l**u**nar, t**u**ne)
Ф	*ф*	f	(as in **f**ood, **f**unny, Cali**f**ornia)
Х	*х*	kh	(as in Lo**ch** Ness)
Ц	*ц*	ts	(as in i**ts**, quar**tz**, wal**tz**)
Ч	*ч*	ch	(as in **ch**eap, **ch**ain, **ch**eese)
Ш	*ш*	sh	(as in fi**sh**, **sh**eep, **sh**rimp)
Щ	*щ*	shch	(as in bor**sch**)
Ъ	*ъ*	″	(hard sign; no equivalent)
Ы	*ы*	y	(as in r**i**p, fl**i**p)
Ь	*ь*	′	(soft sign; no equivalent)
Э	*э*	e	(as in b**e**st, ch**e**st, **e**ffort)
Ю	*ю*	yu	(as in **you**, **Yu**kon)
Я	*я*	ya	(as in **ya**rd, **ya**hoo)

Contributors

John Haile Cloe is a retired Air Force historian who has authored numerous articles and two books, *Top Cover for America: The Air Force in Alaska, 1920–1983*, and *The Aleutian Warriors: A History of the 11th Air Force and Fleet Air Wing 4*. Cloe has frequently appeared on the History and Discovery channels as an expert on Alaska's military past. Recently, he initiated tours to Aleutian military sites. He is the recipient of the Alaska Historical Society's Alaska Historian of the Year and Atwood Trailblazer awards and has received Air Force Historian of the Year and Excellence in Programs awards. Cloe is a retired Army Reserve colonel who served two combat tours in Vietnam as an infantry officer. He lives with his wife Susan, a retired journalist and media executive, in the Rabbit Creek area of Anchorage, Alaska.

Alexander B. Dolitsky has been the president of the Alaska–Siberia Research Center in Juneau, Alaska, since 1990. Dolitsky was born and raised in Kiev in the former Soviet Union. He received an MA in history from Kiev Pedagogical Institute in 1976. In 1978, he settled in the United States where, in 1983, he earned an MA in anthropology and archaeology from Brown University. He lectured at the Russian Center at Bryn Mawr College from 1983 to 1985. After moving to Alaska in the mid-1980s, he worked as an archaeologist and social scientist for the U.S. Forest Service (1985–87), an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Russian Studies at the University of Alaska Southeast (1985–99), and Social Studies Instructor at the Alaska Department of Education (1988–2006). He has conducted 32 field studies in various areas of the former Soviet Union, Central Asia, South America, Eastern Europe, and the United States. Dolitsky was the Project Manager for the *WWII Alaska–Siberia Lend-Lease Memorial* erected in Fairbanks in 2006. He has published extensively in the fields of anthropology, history, archaeology, and ethnography in *Current Anthropology*, *Arctic*, *American Antiquity*, *Sibirica*, *Russkiy Vek* (*Russian Century*), *Voenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal* (*Military-History Journal*), and *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*. His more recent books include *Allies in Wartime: The Alaska–Siberia Airway during WWII*; *Spirit of the Siberian Tiger: Folktales of the Russian Far East*; and *Living Wisdom of the Far North: Tales and Legends from Chukotka and Alaska*.

Victor D. Glazkov served in the Great Patriotic War, including as a radio operator on the Alaska–Siberia Air Route, from 1941 to 1945. He completed high school on the eve of the war and enlisted in the army as a volunteer. After completion of on-board radio operator courses at the Novosibirsk Civil Aviation Flight Center, he flew in the Moscow Special Mission Aviation Group (*MAON*), which serviced all fronts. From August 1942 to September 1945, he served on the Alaska–Siberia Ferry Route. He flew across the front line to deliver provisions and munitions on 28 occasions. He flew 2,160 hours on the Alaska–Siberia Air Route, transporting 2,600 flight crew personnel and ferrying 23 C-47 transport aircraft. In addition, he executed several particularly important missions transporting international passengers and cargo from Moscow to Washington and back, and also on flights to Kamchatka, Tiksi, and Ulan Ude. In the post-war years, Glazkov worked as an on-board radio operator in civilian aviation in Yakutia and later in Kazakhstan. After he stopped flying in 1990, he settled in Kiev, Ukraine, where he worked for the Ukraine Directorate of Civilian Aviation, initially as a dispatcher for the management of air movements and, later, as a flight simulation instructor and chief of the department for aircraft movement schedules. Over his aviation career, Glazkov logged 18,346 hours of flight time.

Dan Hagedorn is a Curator and Director of Collections at The Museum of Flight at historic Boeing Field in Seattle, Washington. Hagedorn is a graduate of Villa Maria College, the State University of New York, and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. He was previously Adjunct Curator and Research Team Leader at the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., for 19 years. Prior to that, he served in the U.S. Armed Forces for 27 years in leadership and intelligence positions worldwide. He has, to date, authored 21 monographs or books detailing various aspects of aviation and aerospace history. In conjunction with the 150th Anniversary of the Smithsonian Institution, he was named an Unsung Hero of the Smithsonian Institution and was awarded the *Orden Merito Santos-Dumont* by the Brazilian government for services to Latin American aviation history, in which he specializes.

Major James F. Gebhardt, U.S. Army (Ret.), served three years (1966–69) as an enlisted infantryman, including a year in Vietnam, and 17 years (1974–91) as a commissioned officer (Armor branch, Soviet Foreign Area Officer). He received his BA degree in 1974 from the University of Idaho and MA degree in 1976 from the University of Washington. He is a 1984 graduate of the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California, and a 1986 graduate of the U.S. Army Russian Institute at Garmisch, Germany. Gebhardt is a recognized author and translator in Soviet military subjects. He authored a detailed historical study, based primarily on Russian language sources, that was published by the U.S. Army in 1990 under the title *The Petsamo-Kirkenes Operation: Soviet Breakthrough and Pursuit in the Arctic, October 1944*. His translated works include Viktor Leonov's *Blood on the Shores: Soviet Naval Commandos in World War II* (Naval Institute Press, 1993), Dmitry Loza's *Commanding the Red Army's Sherman Tanks* and *Fighting for the Soviet Motherland* (University of Nebraska Press, 1996, 1998), and *Attack of the Airacobras: Soviet Aces, American P-39s, and the Air War against Germany* (University Press of Kansas, 2002).

Ivan Yefimovich Negenblya was born in 1938 in Poltavshchina, Ukraine. After completing his studies at Kiev Civil Aviation Institute in 1961, he worked as an engineer at the Yakutsk Aviation Technical Base (ATB). Beginning in 1968, he was the chief of the ATB of Magansk Aviation Enterprise; later, starting in 1974, he served as senior instructor in the 17th Aviation Training Detachment. From 1995 to 2001, he worked as a correspondent for the newspaper *Severnaya trassa* (Northern Route). Negenblya has been engaged in the study of aviation history for many years. He regularly publishes materials on this theme in the Russian press. Since 1990, he has published 43 books. The most significant include *Alyaska-Sibir: Trassa muzhestva* (Alaska–Siberia: Route of Courage); *Istoria inzhenerno-aviatsionnoy sluzhby Yakutii* (History of the engineering-aviation service of Yakutia); *Malaya gavan neba Yakutii* (Small harbor of the Yakutia sky); *Vertolyoty v nebe Yakutii* (Helicopters in the Yakutia sky); and the photo albums *Krylya Respubliki Sakha (Yakutia)* (Wings of Sakha Republic (Yakutia)) and *Alyaska–Sibir: Nad tundroy i taygoy* (Alaska–Siberia: over the tundra and tayga). Negenblya has been honored as an esteemed aviation worker of Sakha (Yakutia). He is a member of the Union of Journalists of Russia.

Henry Varnum Poor (1887–1970) was born in Chapman, Kansas, a very small town just west of Junction City and Fort Riley. He was an American architect, painter, sculptor, muralist, potter, and writer. He was a grandnephew of Henry Varnum Poor, who published the predecessor to what would become Standard & Poor's Index. Poor attended Stanford University, studied painting both at the Slade School in London and under painter Walter Sickert, then attended the Académie Julian in Paris. He returned to the United States in 1911 and taught art at Stanford University before moving to San Francisco to teach at the San Francisco Art Association. Poor has long been considered one of America's leading painters and muralists. His murals appear in the buildings of the Departments of Justice and the Interior in Washington, D.C., and he is represented in many museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Anchorage Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. He saw service in France in World War I and was head of the War Department's unit of artists appointed to cover the Alaska theater during World War II. In addition to painting and drawing, Poor was a specialist in pottery and tile decoration who designed the ceiling for the Union Dime Savings Bank in New York. He was married to the writer Bessie Breuer, who assisted him in drafting his insightful book *An Artist Sees Alaska*. Poor's papers are preserved in the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Photo [Henry Varnum Poor], ca. 1930/unidentified photographer. Forbes Watson papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Acknowledgments

As I write this acknowledgment, I find myself wondering if anyone's successes and accomplishments ever result solely from their own efforts and talents. Or are those who achieve greatness and world recognition always helped by less visible supporters and collaborators? Would Michelangelo have become one of the greatest artists of the Italian Renaissance period—and arguably of all time—without the support and sponsorship of the art patron Lorenzo de' Medici? Would genius Russian writer Leo Tolstoy have produced his epic *War and Peace*—regarded by many to be the greatest novel ever written—without laborious secretarial help from his wife Sophia Behr? Could young athletes become Olympic champions without their parents' or coaches' support and encouragement? The answer is most likely that no major undertaking—whether research writing, creative work, or scientific discovery—ever gets finished without the help of supporters and collaborators. It is certainly true of this volume, which could not have been completed without the interest and advocacy of Janis Kozlowski, manager of the Shared Beringian Heritage Program of the U.S. National Park Service in Anchorage, Alaska.

After my brief introduction to the memoirs of Victor Glazkov was sent to Janis, she instantly recognized the significance of Glazkov's rare first-person account and saw an urgent need to share the memoirs with other Alaskans and students of history. I am grateful to Janis, her staff and the Alaska Affiliated Areas Program of the U.S. National Park Service for funding and supporting this project to its ultimate publication.

A team of well-known military historians—James F. Gebhardt (translator, co-editor of the Glazkov chapter, consultant, and copy editor for this edition), Dan Hagedorn (consultant and author of the Foreword), John Cloe (consultant and writer of the Introduction), and Ivan Negenblya (consultant and co-editor of the Glazkov Russian edition)—contributed greatly to this book. Their positive engagement, enthusiasm, and knowledge of the subject have made this work a unique and credible source for scholars, students, and popular readers of Alaska's military history.

Copy editors Liz Dodd and James Gebhardt, cartographer Brad Slama, cover designer Andy Romanoff of Alaska Litho, and book designer Matt Knutson refined important literary and technical aspects in the production of this edition, with insightful assistance from Senior Cultural Anthropologist Dr. Rachel Mason of the National Park Service, Alaska Region. The board members and advisers of the Alaska-Siberia Research Center—Dr. Charles Holmes, Dianne Holmes, Mark Kissel, David McMahan, Masha Skuratovskaya, Jay Brodrick, Dr. Tom Hanley, Glenn Bacon, Brian Dulka, Ted Spencer and Martin Niemi—provided valuable comments and information. I am thankful to Ilya Grinberg of the State University of New York at Buffalo for sharing his insights during our stimulating discussions regarding the Alaska-Siberia Air Route during World War II.

Alexander B. Dolitsky
President
Alaska-Siberia Research Center
Juneau, Alaska
www.aksrc.homestead.com

Preface

This comprehensive edition is a reminder to Alaskans and all of mankind of a remarkable chapter in the world's history, when peace-seeking nations united against evil.

In the "worst of times" between 1939 and 1945, 55 million people died violent deaths—the majority of them not as soldiers-in-arms but as defenseless civilians, including the millions of victims of the Holocaust. Yet, in one way, this period was also the "best of times," when many countries of the world rallied against the ultimate rogue states of Germany and Japan to achieve the total defeat of German Nazism and Japanese militarism.

The United States' Lend-Lease program contributed greatly to the victory in World War II, and the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union in particular. The volume of materiel transferred from the United States to the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945 was indeed staggering: nearly 15,000 airplanes, 7,000 tanks, 51,000 jeeps, 376,000 trucks, 132,000 machine guns, 4.5 million tons of food, 107 million tons of cotton, and more than 15 million pairs of army boots, among other items. At its peak in 1944, American help amounted to 12 percent of the Soviet gross national product.[1]

Ladd Army Airfield (now Fort Wainwright) in Fairbanks, Alaska, served as a key transfer point for nearly 8,000 American-built combat aircraft from the United States to the Russian battlefronts on the Alaska–Siberia (ALSIB) Air Route. In the three years of the route's existence, thousands of Americans worked with Soviet personnel on the cooperative program. From 1942 to 1945, the Alaska–Siberia Lend-Lease operations demonstrated that two nations could set aside differing views, cultural values, and ideologies to achieve a common, mutually beneficial goal: to defeat Nazi Germany and its Axis partners.

The heroism and dedication of the Soviet and American participants of the Alaska–Siberia Airway will not be forgotten. It is our civic duty to express our deep respect to those whose efforts led to the program's success and, in the process, brought the war to a close. This is our history. Future generations should be brought up with a respectful spirit of patriotism to understand this history of cooperation between our countries. This edition will preserve awareness of that massive effort for all time.

The present edition, *Pipeline to Russia: The Alaska–Siberia Air Route in World War II*, highlights the complexity of the ALSIB undertaking, its home-front significance and contribution to winning the war, and the people-to-people Soviet–American connections forged in North America during this turbulent wartime. The book consists of four chapters, a Preface, Foreword, Introduction, Selected Bibliography, Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations and Index.

The aim of the first chapter, "Combat Aircraft to Siberia: U.S. Lend-Lease Aid to the Soviet Union in World War II," is: *first*, to recount the history of the U.S.–Soviet Lend-Lease Agreement; and *second*, to preserve the memories of Bill Schoeppe, who worked as an airplane mechanic at Ladd Army Airfield in Fairbanks and in Nome from 1942 to 1945. Although many Alaskans assisted the Soviets during the war, to date, oral testimonies of this period are virtually absent. Documentation of memories of workers with first-hand experience of life along the ALSIB route, like those of American Bill Schoeppe in chapter one and Soviet Victor Glazkov in chapter two, is urgently needed, not only to provide an accurate portrayal of Soviet–American relations during World War II, but also to preserve accounts of this historic undertaking from the point of view of those who participated directly in the delivery of Lend-Lease combat aircraft via the ALSIB route between 1942 and 1945.

The chapter's *third* aim is to demonstrate how the domestic needs of the United States, not purely patriotic or altruistic motives, once did and might again determine the direction of its foreign policies and external affairs. Not until 16 years after the USSR's inception did the United States recognize it both *de jure* and *de facto*. After the United States and the Soviet Union finally did confirm their first

[1] Istvan Deak, "Allies and Enemies," *New Republic*, July 3, 2006, p. 35.

diplomatic agreement on November 16, 1933, hostility between the two countries continued.[2] Yet, despite persistent political tensions, the United States, in the summer and fall of 1941, offered the USSR a generous Lend-Lease aid agreement that expressed its desire for close collaboration against a common enemy—Nazi Germany and its Axis partners. In exploring why the United States would offer such substantial support to its former ideological and political rival, we find ourselves asking: Must history between nations with different economic and political structures be a static phenomenon with little or no change in their relations? Or is that history in constant flux based on immediate needs and distribution of forces?

In the second chapter, "We Flew in the Same Sky: The Alaska–Siberia Air Route in World War II," Victor Glazkov, an on-board radio operator of a C-47 transport aircraft and a direct participant in the ALSIB ferrying operations, recollects the events of those years. The original handwritten manuscript of Glazkov's memoirs was gifted to the Pioneer Air Museum in Fairbanks, Alaska, in June 1992, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the opening of the ALSIB Air Route. The memoirs were first released in Russian under the editorship of Ivan Negenblya and myself. For this English edition, James Gebhardt translated them from Russian into English, with my editing assistance.

The third chapter contains another first-person account of the Lend-Lease days, Henry Varnum Poor's "An Artist Sees Alaska: Portraits at a Russian Base." The piece was originally included in Poor's book *An Artist Sees Alaska*, published by Viking Press in 1945. It is reprinted here with minor edits and corrections.

Henry Poor was assigned by the War Department to record the war in the Alaska theater in drawings and paintings. With the perceptive eye of an artist, he recorded the significant details of the physical attributes of Alaska and its people during the war. His descriptions and drawings of the Russian and American participants on the ALSIB bases in Alaska are insightful and human. Poor's unique narrative provides a first-hand historical account of the cooperation between the American and Russian governments in this almost forgotten period of Alaska history, through an artist's eyes.

This edition concludes with a short essay, "One for All and All for One: Lessons of the Alaska–Siberia Air Route"—a tribute to the participants in the Lend-Lease operations, including those on the Alaska–Siberia Air Route, who fought the war on the home front. In May of 1945, when the war ended in Europe, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill declared: "It was American war production that won the war in Europe." Indeed, the United States Lend-Lease Program, in cooperation with 42 Lend-Lease-recipient countries, was an essential home-front undertaking that greatly contributed to the victory in World War II and, eventually, influenced the establishment of a new "world order" in the post-war era.

This book is a testimonial source for students of history and political science and others who seek to embellish their libraries with books that preserve accounts of the unique and history-altering events that occurred in Alaska and Siberia during World War II. The thorough research by the authors, engaging stories of the participants in the ALSIB Air Route, and authentic photographs, drawings, and paintings of the period, make this book unique, educational, and entertaining.

Alexander B. Dolitsky
President
Alaska–Siberia Research Center
Juneau, Alaska
www.aksrc.homestead.com

[2] A.P. Zatsarinsky, ed. *Ekonomicheskiye otnosheniya SSSR s zarubezhnymi stranami, 1917–1967* [Economic Relations of the USSR with Foreign Countries, 1917–1967]. Moscow: *Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya,* 1967 [hereinafter Zatsarinsky, *Ekonomicheskiye otnosheniya SSSR*], p. 72.

Foreword

I developed a keen interest in aviation at a very young age, which led me to the National Archives in Washington, D.C., when my parents bestowed on me the generous gift of a trip to the nation's capital for my 16th birthday.

As I was taking my first steps into the National Archives, by pure luck and good fortune, I happened to come across and make the acquaintance of John E. Taylor, an archivist there. Mr. Taylor (who seemed quite ancient to me at the time) introduced me to a huge rectangular ledger titled "ADO-478: Report of Lend-Lease Aircraft Requisitions and Deliveries." As I slowly worked my way through this ledger, I became more astonished with each page I turned. Here was an epic story—and one that I would revisit time and time again as I slowly came to make aviation history my life's work.

Nearly 40 years later, my good friend Phil Butler and I collaborated on a definitive book on Lend-Lease titled *Air Arsenal North America: Aircraft for the Allies 1938-1945, Purchase and Lend-Lease*, published in 2004 by Midland in the United Kingdom. My contributions consisted of plumbing the original records of the pivotal Munitions Assignment Board (Air) at the National Archives—and who was there to assist me but none other than Mr. John E. Taylor!

The nuts and bolts of the actual aircraft, the study of which has always been my passion, were merely tools in the truly masterful creation known as Lend-Lease—in my view, a pivotal factor in the defeat of the Axis powers. The real story, so vividly detailed by my colleagues in this edition, involved ordinary people and airmen from two vastly different cultures, the Soviet Union and United States, who came together to defeat the most hideous creation in the history of mankind: Nazi Germany and its Axis partners. One might wonder if our enemies ever fully comprehended the importance of this unprecedented strategy in bringing about the Allied victory. One might also wonder, had they truly appreciated the program's power, what might have been the impact of their emulating this strategy among their allies. The ramifications of Lend-Lease's success can now be seen to have been not only regional and strategic, but global and historic.

While, admittedly, some facets of the program may remain forever unknowable, this exquisitely detailed volume, *Pipeline to Russia: The Alaska–Siberia Air Route in World War II*, brings the human effort behind the success of the Lend-Lease program, and the Alaska–Siberia Air Route, in particular, to the fore with candor and scholarship.

The following accounts of the ALSIB program remind us that peace-seeking nations—even those built on disparate socio-economic structures and holding extremely divergent political views—can, when confronted with an evil such as fascism, achieve cooperation and collegiality. The Lend-Lease Protocols, and the aircraft and personnel deployed in the execution of the Protocols, indisputably played a critical role in the ultimate success of the Allied forces in World War II. At the core of the program's success stood many heroic men and women. The following chapters tell but some of their stories.

Dan Hagedorn
Curator and Director of Collections
The Museum of Flight
Seattle, Washington

Introduction

It is said that when Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Affairs Commissar, arrived at the White House on May 30, 1942, to discuss the possibility of a Lend-Lease program with President Roosevelt, he carried in his luggage some sausage, a piece of black bread, and a pistol. The idea that Premier Stalin's minister of foreign affairs would come prepared to feed and protect himself during his stay in Washington, D.C., underlines the wariness with which the two ideologically opposed nations approached the talks. This suspicion had existed since the eruption of the 25 October 1917 Socialist Revolution in Russia and subsequent interference in the new country's affairs by a coalition of Western countries, including the United States.

With the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the two nations recognized the need to put aside their ideological differences. Aware of the urgency of the situation, President Roosevelt extended Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union on October 30, 1941, following a fact-finding visit to Moscow by his emissary Harry Lloyd Hopkins. The aid ranged from cases of Spam to aircraft, tanks, and numerous non-military items shipped to the Soviet Union via three major routes on the North and Central Atlantic and the North Pacific, with 47 percent of the war materials going by cargo vessel from western U.S. ports across the North Pacific to ports in the Soviet Far East.

By August of 1942, the United States and Soviet Union had agreed to open a similar route for the transfer of aircraft. It began in Great Falls, Montana, and extended across northwestern Canada to Ladd Army Airfield near Fairbanks, where Soviet pilots took over the job of ferrying American-built aircraft the rest of the way using a series of Siberian bases that terminated in Krasnoyarsk in western Siberia.

A few books have been written about the transfer of aircraft over what is commonly called the Alaska–Siberia Route and popularly referred to as "ALSIB." Otis Hays' *The Alaska–Siberia Connection: The World War II Air Route*, published in 1996, and Phil Butler and Dan Hagedorn's 2004 book, *Air Arsenal North America: Aircraft for the Allies 1938-1945, Purchase and Lend-Lease* stand out. Everett A. Long and Ivan E. Negenblya also provided a well-illustrated account from their personal perspectives in their 1992 book *Cobras Over the Tundra.*

Alexander B. Dolitsky, a Russian political refugee from the fomer Soviet Union and ALSIB expert with access to Soviet records on Lend-Lease, has brought new scholarship to the little-known World War II subject. He was instrumental in forming the Alaska-Siberia Research Center in Juneau, Alaska, in 1990. It was also through Alexander Dolitsky's efforts that the imposing World War II Alaska–Siberia Lend-Lease Monument was dedicated in Fairbanks in August 2006 in the presence of a host of dignitaries that included Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK), U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald R. Rumsfeld, Russian Minister of Defense Sergey Ivanov, Russian Ambassador to the U.S. Yuri Ushakov, and other officials and guests from the U.S., Canada, England, and France. Following the dedication of the memorial, Dolitsky arranged for the lavishly illustrated publication of the large format *Allies in Wartime: The Alaska-Siberia Airway During World War II*, published in 2007 by the Alaska–Siberia Research Center. Edited by Dolitksy, it contains an impressive compilation of historical and contemporary accounts of the ALSIB undertaking.

Recently, Alexander Dolitksy partnered with the U.S. National Park Service's Shared Beringian Heritage Program to produce this volume, *Pipeline to Russia: The Alaska–Siberia Air Route in World War II*. As with his previous publication, *Allies in Wartime*, Dolitksy provides clarifying commentary while allowing Lend-Lease participants to tell the story in their own words. In this work, Victor Glazkov, a radio operator on a C-47 transport plane, provides a first-hand account from the Russian perspective; and Bill Schoeppe, who worked as an airplane mechanic at Ladd Army Airfield in Fairbanks and Nome from 1942 to 1945, and well-known artist, Henry Varnum Poor, also recount their experiences as Americans who served the effort in different ways.

Like previous works on Lend-Lease, *Pipeline to Russia* provides an account of the transfer of 7,926 aircraft to the Russian battlefields that included 2,618 Bell P-39 Airacobra and 2,397 Bell P-63 KingCobra fighters; 1,363 Douglas A-20 Havoc attack aircraft; 732 North American B-25 Mitchell medium bombers; 710 Douglas C-47 Skytrain transports; 54 AT-6 Texan trainers; 48 Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighters; three Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighters, and one Curtiss C-46 Commando transport.[3] In addition to the ALSIB transfers, the U.S. Navy turned over 30 Catalina PBY amphibian patrol aircraft to the Russians at Naval Air Station Kodiak and 137 small warships at Cold Bay on the Alaska Peninsula.[4]

The transfer of Lend-Lease materials, including aircraft and vessels, provided welcome relief to the Soviet Union—a nation at the time engaged in a titanic struggle with Nazi Germany and her Axis powers that would claim 13,600,000 military personnel and 7,720,000 civilian lives. Often lost is the fact that the Soviet Union bore the brunt of the war against Nazi Germany and its partners. Notably, the Soviet military's loss of lieutenants alone exceeded the total number of American military casualties.[5]

In carrying out their ALSIB orders, many Soviet pilots lost their lives in North America and Siberia. The bodies of 14 Russian airmen and support personnel rest in the Allied Plot of the Fort Richardson National Cemetery near Anchorage, Alaska.

The Lend-Lease Program signaled the United States' commitment to stand by its war-time allies. Despite the ensuing Cold War, the Russians have not forgotten this debt and have reached out on several occasions to recount and reestablish the old war-time bond, including in a major two-part article titled "When We Were Allies," by Peter Petrov, published in 1991 in the journal *Soviet Life*. On the American side, Alexander Dolitsky and the Alaska-Siberia Research Center have performed an invaluable service in keeping the memories of the ALSIB air route alive.

John Haile Cloe
Retired Air Force historian
Anchorage, Alaska

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[3] Blake W. Smith, "The Northwest Route to Alaska," in Dolitsky, ed., *Allies in Wartime: The Alaska-Siberia Airway During World War II*, Juneau: Alaska-Siberia Research Center, 2007, p. 42.

[4] Command History, North Pacific Force. Submitted to Directorate of Naval History, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet, Dec. 6, 1945, pp. 110-25.

[5] Robert Goralski, *World War II Almanac 1931-1945: A Political and Military Record*, New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 1981, p. 428.

Editor's note: A 1993 study by the Russian Academy of Sciences estimated total Soviet civilian and military losses in the war to be 26.6 million.

Combat Aircraft to Siberia

U.S. Lend-Lease Aid to the Soviet Union in World War II [1]

Alexander B. Dolitsky
President
Alaska–Siberia Research Center
Juneau, Alaska

> *"The structure of world peace cannot be the work of one man, or one party, or one nation…it must be a peace which rests on the cooperative effort of the whole world."*
>
> **Franklin Delano Roosevelt, March 1, 1945**
> *Address to Congress on the Yalta Conference*

Stalin's Folly and the Nazi Germany Invasion of the Soviet Union

On August 23, 1939, the Soviet Union astounded the world by signing a non-aggression treaty with Nazi Germany. The Hitler–Stalin Pact (often referred to as the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact) meant that the Nazi leaders now had a "green light" to attack Poland and other democracies without fear of intervention from the Red Army. With the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact, the conditions for the start of World War II were set. On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany attacked Poland, and, on September 17, the Red Army advanced into the eastern part of that country, claiming their share of old, pre-revolutionary Russian Poland. Several days after the German invasion of Poland, Britain and France, honoring their treaty commitments to Poland, declared war on Nazi Germany and the other Axis powers.

[1] This article is revised, updated, and reprinted with the publisher's permission from *Allies in Wartime: The Alaska-Siberia Airway During World War II*, Juneau, AK: Alaska–Siberia Research Center, 2007 [hereinafter Dolitsky, *Allies in Wartime*], pp. 1–22.

Not only did Stalin place an almost naive faith in the 1939 Non-Aggression Pact, but up until June of 1941, provided Hitler with all sorts of raw materials and logistical support to feed the Nazi war machine. Then, on June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany launched a massive attack against the Soviet Union. Operation Barbarossa had begun. One hundred and fifty-three German divisions crossed the Soviet border along a wide front, while German planes carried out heavy bombing of border installations, airfields, railway stations, and towns. At the same time, Romania, Hungary, and Finland sent a combined total of 37 divisions against the Soviet Union. Altogether, the Axis powers amassed 190 divisions, comprising 5.5 million men, 3,712 tanks, 4,950 planes, 47,260 guns and mortars, and 193 military ships, along the Soviet borders.[2] Fascist Italy also declared war on the Soviet Union, and Spain and Bulgaria further aided Germany. At the same time, Japan held a million soldiers of the well-trained Kwantung Army ready for action along the Soviet Far Eastern borders.[3]

Figure 1 *(modified after Catchpole, 1990, p. 30)*

[2] A. M. Soskin, ed., *Istoriya KPSS: 1937-1971* [History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: 1937-1971]. Moscow: Politizdat, 1972, vol. 4 [hereinafter Soskin, *Istoriya KPSS*], p. 34.

[3] M. P. Kim, ed., *History of the USSR: The Era of Socialism*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982 [hereinafter Kim, *History of the USSR*], p. 358.

The situation along the Eastern Front at the beginning of the invasion proved extremely unfavorable for the Soviet Army. The Soviets suffered devastating damage from enemy air attacks that destroyed almost the entire Soviet Air Force in the first week of the invasion—4,017 out of the 7,700 aircraft in the western Soviet Union (this may not include 1,445 aircraft of the three western naval air forces) for the loss of only 150 *Luftwaffe* aircraft.[4] In fact, some sources suggest that on the second day of the war alone the Soviet Air Force lost a total of 3,922 aircraft, while downing only 78 enemy planes.[5]

By early July of 1941, the Germans occupied Lithuania, a large part of Latvia, and the western territories of Belorussia and Ukraine and were approaching the Western Dvina River and the upper reaches of the Dnieper River. Through unparalleled acts of bravery on the part of thousands of Soviet soldiers, by mid-July 1941, the enemy was halted near Kiev and remained stopped for 73 days. The German *Wehrmacht* killed or captured more than 660,000 Soviets in the battles of Kiev—about one third of the deployed Red Army. The battles at Kiev and Uman would prove to be the greatest defeats in the history of the Russian people.[6] As a result of the defeat, the north, center, and south were left wide open to rapid German advances (Figure 1).

By November of 1941, the Germans occupied the Baltic States, Byelorussia, Moldavia, most of Ukraine, Crimea, and a large part of Karelia east of Finland. They had also seized considerable territory around Leningrad and Moscow (Figure 1). Before the war, those occupied parts of the country had contained 40 percent of the total population of the Soviet Union and had produced 63 percent of the nation's coal, 58 percent of its steel, and 38 percent of its grain. Not only were the human losses enormous, but the Soviet people suddenly found their independence threatened once again.[7]

To Help or Not To Help?

To help the Western Allies fight the Nazi war machine in Europe, in early 1941 U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt introduced in the Congress a Lend-Lease bill titled "An Act Further to Promote the Defense of the United States." The bill was intensely debated throughout the United States, with the most strident opposition coming from isolationists and anti-Roosevelt Republicans. Nevertheless, on March 11, 1941, Congress approved the Lend-Lease Act, granting to the president the plenary powers to sell, transfer title to, exchange, lease, lend, or arrange in whatever manner he deemed necessary the delivery of military materials or military information to the government of a friendly country, if its defense against aggression was vitally important for the defense of the United States. The passing of the Lend-Lease Act was in effect an economic declaration of war against Nazi Germany and its Axis partners. Most Americans were prepared to take that risk rather than see Britain collapse, leaving the United States to face the Axis powers alone.

After the Nazi German invasion of the Soviet Union, the governments of Britain and the United States declared their support for the USSR in its struggle against fascist aggression. On June 22, 1941, Winston Churchill, speaking over the radio, announced, "Hitler's invasion of Russia was only a prelude to an invasion of the British Isles," and, on June 23, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt made the statement to the media that "Hitler's armies are today the chief dangers to the Americas." Roosevelt's statement contained no distinct promise of aid to the Soviets but stated clearly the State Department's policy. The next day, on June 24, 1941, the President announced at a press conference that the United States would give all possible help to the Soviet people in their struggle against Nazi

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[4] Alexander Boyd, *The Soviet Air Force Since 1918*, New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1977, pp. 110–11.

[5] Von Hardesty and Ilya Grinberg, *Red Phoenix Rising: The Soviet Air Force in World War II*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012 [hereinafter Hardesty and Grinberg, *Red Phoenix Rising*], p. 9.

[6] Brian Catchpole, *A Map History of Russia*. London: Butler and Tanner Ltd., 1990, p. 66.

[7] B.D. Datsyuk, *Istoriya SSSR* [History of the USSR], vol. 2. Moscow: Mysl, 1972, p. 277; Kim, *History of the USSR*, pp. 358–62.

Franklin D. Roosevelt signing the Lend-Lease Act on March 11, 1941. Several months later, in December 1941, Roosevelt signed the Declaration of War against Japan.

Germany and its Axis partners. That same day, Roosevelt released Soviet assets in American banks, which had been frozen after the Soviet attack on Finland on November 30, 1939; this enabled the Soviets immediately to purchase 59 fighter aircraft. Preliminary discussions between U.S., British, and Soviet officials on deliveries of arms and other vital supplies began on June 26, 1941.[8] A British credit line was subsequently opened on August 16, 1941, and arms deliveries from England were immediately initiated, with the American Lend-Lease principles as guidelines. Soon after the U.S.–Soviet Lend-Lease agreement was signed on June 11, 1942, Britain's ongoing provision of materials to the Soviet Union was formalized in a British–Soviet Lend-Lease agreement signed on June 26.

Many conservatives in the United States argued vociferously against the US–Soviet Pact, asserting that America's aid should be disbursed only to proven friends, such as Great Britain and China. In congressional debates on the subject in late July and August, isolationists insisted that to aid the Soviet Union was to aid communism. In June of 1941, U.S. Senator (later President, 1945–54) Harry Truman expressed common American sentiments on Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union: "If we see that Germany is winning, we ought to help Russia, and if we see Russia is winning, we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible."[9]

At the same time, others thought the Russian front might be America's salvation. In July of 1941, a public opinion poll indicated that 54 percent of Americans opposed Soviet aid, but by September those opposed registered only 44 percent, and those who favored helping the Soviet Union had risen to 49 percent.[10] Roosevelt's approach to aiding the Soviets was cautious but intuitively optimistic. He distrusted them but did not think that they, in contrast to the Germans, intended to conquer Europe. He viewed Hitler's armies as the chief threat to the Americas. Roosevelt calculated the Soviets would resist the German assault longer than anyone anticipated, which would help the British to fight the war, and perhaps preclude America's entry into Europe and North Africa.[11] The President relied heavily on the assessment of senior advisers Harry Lloyd Hopkins and Averell William Harriman, who urged him to bring the Soviet Union under Lend-Lease agreement. But Roosevelt still held back.

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[8] Robert H. Jones, *The Roads to Russia: United States Lend-Lease to the Soviet Union*. Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1969 [hereinafter Jones, *The Roads to Russia*], p. 35.

[9] David M. Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, Thomas A. Bailey, *The American Pageant*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002, p. 822.

[10] Jones, *The Roads to Russia*, p. 55.

[11] Arnold A. Offner, *The Origins of the Second World War*. Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1986 [hereinafter Offner, *The Origins*], p. 206.

In July of 1941, Roosevelt appointed two American special assistants, Harry Hopkins and Melvin Purvis, and Soviet Ambassador to the United States Constantine Oumansky to an intergovernmental committee on Soviet aid; he also dispatched his trusted aide Harry Hopkins to go to the Soviet Union in order to assess the Soviet military situation and talk with Soviet officials. After meeting with Stalin and other Soviet authorities, Hopkins came to the conclusion that the Soviets would withstand the German attack and cabled Washington his opinion to that effect. In early September of 1941, Roosevelt decided to send Averell Harriman, a significant investor in the Soviet Union since 1918, to Moscow as a special adviser on Lend-Lease matters. Harriman, along with British representatives, was charged with working out a temporary aid program.

Negotiating the U.S.-Soviet Lend-Lease Agreement

From September 29 to October 1, 1941, representatives from Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States attended a conference in Moscow. There, a plan was drawn up for delivery of armaments, equipment, and foodstuffs to the Soviet Union. The USSR in turn agreed to provide strategic raw materials to Britain and the United States.[12] During the conference, Harriman for the first time suggested delivery of American aircraft to the Soviet Union via Alaska and Siberia, using American crews. Stalin initially rejected this idea outright, perhaps to avoid provoking Japan. Despite political tensions at the Moscow conference, on October 30, 1941, Roosevelt approved, and, on November 4, Stalin accepted, $1 billion in aid, to be repaid in 10 years, interest free.[13]

Although the Soviet government was pleased with the aid package, its diplomats still complained that the Allies had taken no serious military actions against Germany, leaving the Soviet Union to continue to bear the brunt of the war alone. The Soviets suggested that Britain and the United States open a second front in France or the Balkans or send troops through Iran, which the Soviets and British had jointly occupied in August of 1941, in order to preclude Germany from attacking Ukraine from the south. The Soviet government continued to insist that opening a second front in Europe would relieve pressure from enemy attacks on the Eastern Front. The Allies, however, were reluctant to initiate this plan at the time because of lack of available forces for a second front, due to Allied involvement in the Pacific and North African theaters. Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt, in tacit acknowledgment of the fact that they had not yet reached agreement on joint war or peace aims, thus limited their 1941 pact to Lend-Lease support to the Soviet Union.[14]

On July 7, 1941, a Soviet delegation flew from Vladivostok to Nome and then on to Kodiak and Seattle for secret talks with American officials regarding aircraft deliveries to the USSR and the feasibility of Pacific supply routes. The Soviet and American delegations discussed several possible routes for shipping planes and war materials to the USSR. The first was a sea route across the North Atlantic and around the North Cape to the ice-free Arctic ports of Murmansk and Archangelsk (Figures 2 and 3). This route was shorter but, by far, the more dangerous of those considered because of regular patrols in the area by the German *Kriegsmarine* (navy) and *Luftwaffe* (air force). Another discussed route would transport the materials by ship across the Atlantic Ocean, around South Africa's Cape of Good Hope, and then north to the Iraqi port of Basra, where supplies would be loaded onto trains and trucks and transported to Soviet Central Asia and Azerbaijan via Iran (Figures 2 and 3). This route, too, had serious drawbacks—not only would the goods take too long to reach the USSR, the desert sands in Iran were notorious for infiltrating and ruining aircraft engines.[15]

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[12] Kim, *History of the USSR*, p. 368.

[13] Offner, *The Origins*, p. 207; Eduard A. Ivanyan, *Encyclopedia of Russian-American Relations (18th–20th Centuries)*. Moscow: International Relations, 2001, Appendix.

[14] P. N. Pospelov, *Istoriya Kommunisticheskoy Partii (1938–1945)* [History of the Communist Party: 1938–1945], vol. 5, part 1. Moscow, 1970, p. 543; Offner, *The Origins*, p. 208.

[15] Stan Cohen, *The Forgotten War: A Pictorial History of World War II in Alaska and Northwestern Canada*. Missoula, Mont., 1981, vol. 1 [hereinafter Cohen, *The Forgotten War*, vol. 1], p. 44.

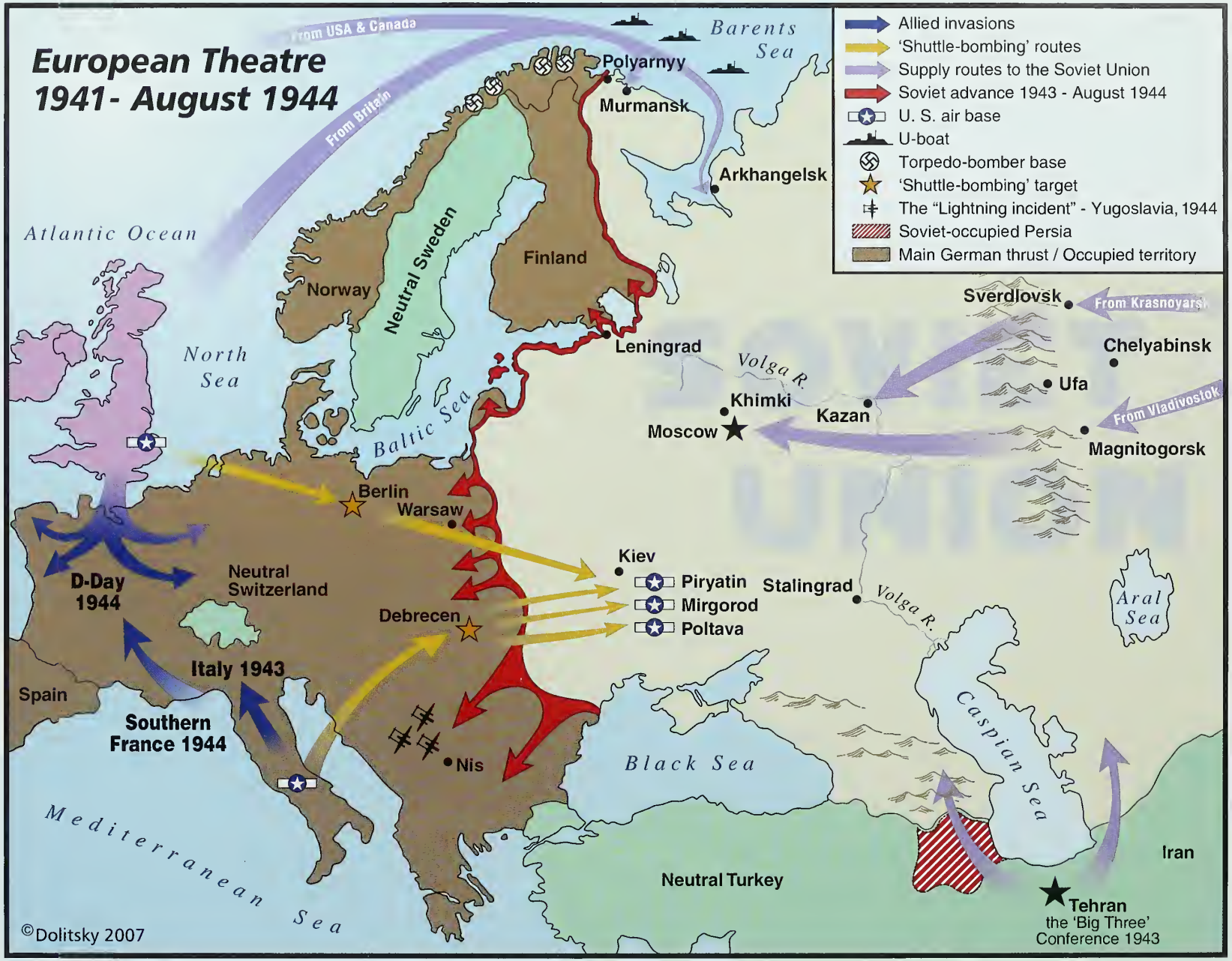

Figure 2

(modified from Catchpole 1990, p. 33)

The four principal routes of American Lend-Lease deliveries to the USSR

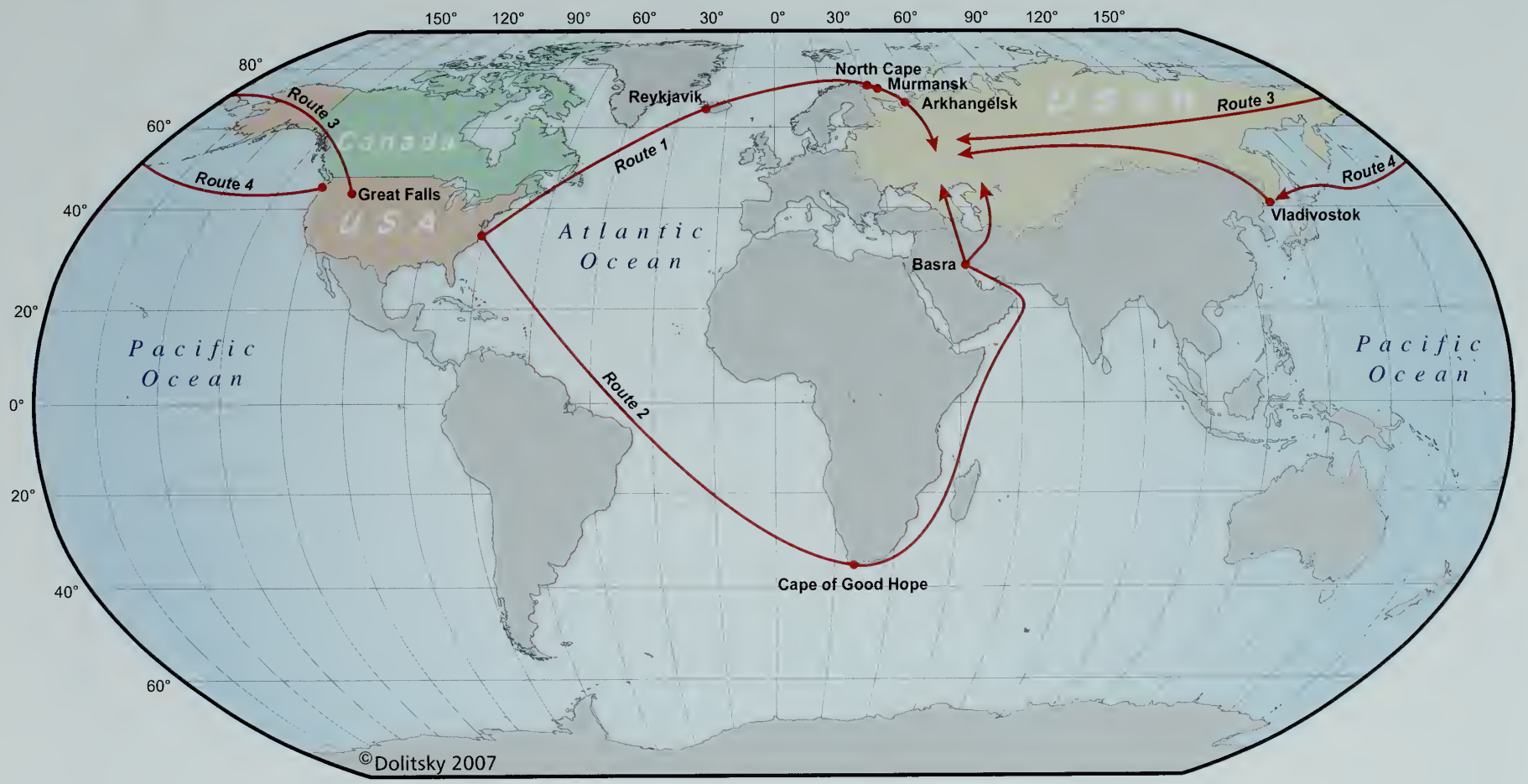

Figure 3

On October 1, 1941, the United States and the USSR signed their first Lend-Lease Protocol, effective from October 1, 1941, through June 30, 1942. The Soviet Union accepted most of the lend-lease terms, but specific details had yet to be worked out. On May 29, 1942, Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Affairs Commissar and the right hand of Joseph Stalin on foreign affairs, arrived in the United States to discuss Lend-Lease matters. It was the Soviet dignitary's first official visit on American soil. Being cautious and uncertain in this formerly hostile country, Molotov carried in his luggage some sausages, a piece of black bread, and a pistol to defend his person if the need arose.[16] During Molotov's visit, President Roosevelt raised two possibilities: (1) that American aircraft be flown to the USSR via Alaska and Siberia; and (2) that Soviet ships pick up Lend-Lease supplies from America's West Coast ports for ferrying across the Pacific to Vladivostok and other Soviet Far Eastern ports—in addition to two other routes (the northern run to Murmansk and the Iran route) proposed earlier, in July 1941. Roosevelt noted that by using the Alaska–Siberia air route, which would connect to the Trans-Siberian Railway, Lend-Lease supplies could more quickly and safely reach the Ural industrial complex around Magnitogorsk (Figures 2–4).

After careful consideration of various proposals, the best route for planes seemed to be via the U.S., Canada, Alaska, and Siberia. Although great distances were involved and the worst possible weather conditions would be encountered, the planes would be delivered in flying condition and the possibility of enemy interference would be remote. American support for the Alaska–Siberia (ALSIB) route was also based on the hope that, eventually, Siberian air bases would be used for bombing raids on Japan.[17] The Soviets, however, were hesitant to use this route, believing it to be too dangerous and impractical. It was also thought that remote Siberian cities would not be able to accommodate the busy air traffic and that the presence of Americans in the Soviet Far East would be unwanted. The Soviets were also afraid that the Pacific supply routes, and the ALSIB route in particular, might provoke Japanese military actions against the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, faced with mounting losses on the sea run to Murmansk, and given the great distances involved in the Middle East route, in October 1941, the Soviet Union's State Defense Committee decided to begin necessary preparatory work for the ALSIB Air Route and finally agreed to open it on August 3, 1942.[18]

Two months prior to the opening of the ALSIB Air Route, the final Soviet–American Lend-Lease Agreement was signed in Washington, D.C., on June 11, 1942. The agreement, titled "Agreement between Governments of the USSR and USA on Principles Employed for the Mutual Assistance in Fighting a War Against the Aggression," stipulated:

> *The government of the United States will continue to supply the Soviet Union, in accordance with the United States Lend-Lease Act of March 11, 1941, with defense materiel, services, and information. The USSR, after the completion of the war, must return to the United States all those defense materiel that have not been destroyed, lost, or unused. On the other side, the USSR is obligated to assist the defense of the United States in providing necessary materiel, services, privileges and information to the extent it is possible.*[19]

The ALSIB delivery route finally became a reality in August of 1942. A North American air transport route connecting Great Falls in Montana, Edmonton and Whitehorse in Canada, and

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[16] James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt, the Soldier of Freedom (1940-1945)*, New York, 1970, p. 232; Robert Francaviglia, *The Alaska–Siberia Aircraft Ferry Project (1942–1945)* [unpublished manuscript, 1973], Alaska State Library, Juneau, p. 1.

[17] Hubert P. van Tuyll, *Feeding the Bear: American Aid to the Soviet Union, 1941-1945*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1989 [hereinafter van Tuyll, *Feeding the Bear*], p. 27.

[18] Cohen, *The Forgotten War*, vol. 1, p. 44; Otis Hays, Jr. *The Alaska–Siberia Connection: The World War II Air Route*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996 [hereinafter Hays, *The Alaska–Siberia Connection*], p. 26.

[19] Zatsarinsky, *Ekonomicheskiye otnosheniya SSSR*, p. 93.

WWII Alaska–Siberia
Lend-Lease Airway
1942–1945
Battlefronts
Krasnoyarsk
Nizhneilimsk
Kirensk
Olyokminsk
Yakutsk
Khandyga
Oymyakon
Seymchan
Khabarovsk
Vladivostok
Magadan
Omolon
Markovo
Anadyr
Uelkal
Nome
Galena
Fairbanks
Big Delta
Tanacross
Northway
Snag
Watson Lake
Whitehorse
Fort Nelson
Fort St. John
Grande Prairie
Edmonton
Calgary
Great Falls
Buffalo
St. Louis
Kansas City
Tulsa
Oklahoma City
Seattle
El Segundo
Santa Monica
Inglewood
Dutch Harbor
Arctic Ocean
Pacific Ocean
Sakhalin
Kamchatka
Japan
Aleutians
ALASKA
CANADA
45°E
90°E
0°
45°W
70°N
135°E
30°N
10°N
180°E/W
50°N
135°W
90°W
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Figure 4

Fairbanks, Galena, and Nome in Alaska was established and operational by mid-October (Figure 4). A major airfield constructed in Nome served as the jumping-off point for airplanes headed for Siberia. Once inside Siberia, planes continued on their long trip from Uelkal through Markovo, Seymchan, Yakutsk, Kirensk, and finally to Krasnoyarsk. In Krasnoyarsk, pilots from combat units took over, flying the newly arrived aircraft westward via Omsk, Sverdlovsk, and Kazan to the Russian battlefronts (Figure 4). Over the program's three years of operation, nearly 8,000 aircraft would be sent through Great Falls to Fairbanks' Ladd Army Airfield for transfer to the Soviet Union, each crossing a total distance of almost 6,050 miles in harsh sub-Arctic and Arctic conditions. The distance over which combat planes were ferried from the manufacturing sites to the warfronts in Europe was even greater: 8,000–10,000 miles across 12 time zones.

Getting Started: The Soviet Mission in Alaska

On August 26, 1942, the first Soviet envoys, Colonel Piskunov and Colonel Alexey A. Anisimov, members of the Soviet Purchasing Commission, arrived in Nome. On September 3, 1942, the first Soviet aircraft arrived in Alaska, bringing more mission members to set up permanent command stations at Ladd Army Airfield, in Fairbanks, and at Nome. By the summer of 1943, many Soviets had been stationed at Fairbanks, Nome, and Galena; at the height of the program anywhere from 150 to 600 Soviet pilots and other personnel resided at Ladd Army Airfield alone.[20] Bill Schoeppe, an airplane mechanic and a technical representative for North American Aviation (the manufacturer of the B-25 bomber), was stationed at Ladd Army Airfield, and then in Nome, from 1942 to 1945. According to his recollection, Soviet servicemen were stationed only in Alaska.

> *No big thing, but it should be known there were no Russian service men stationed at any of our bases in Great Falls, Edmonton, Whitehorse and Yukon. While on assignment with North American Aviation, I traveled many times to our air bases in Canada and Alaska and never met or never heard of Russian personnel along the ferry route.*[21]

Soviets assigned to work on American soil were ideologically drilled to maintain loyalty to their motherland. Separate facilities were built in Fairbanks and Nome for Soviet officers and other staff, and the Soviet government preferred to use its own interpreters and office personnel—predominantly women in uniform who had passed security clearance procedures in the Soviet Union before coming to the United States.[22] "I never saw any female Russian transport pilots [in Alaska]," wrote Bill Schoeppe, "and I flew many hours in Russian [-crewed] B-25s from Fairbanks to Nome."[23] In fact, at the time, women pilots in the USSR were allowed to fly in combat. Many distinguished themselves and earned the country's highest medal for combat valor: Hero of the Soviet Union.

Although the Soviet airmen who were sent to Alaska to pick up the Lend-Lease aircraft were guests in Alaska, and in the Soviet Union the Alaskan mission was regarded as a "rest from combat," they tended to remain aloof from U.S. personnel. On those occasions when Soviets would socialize with Americans, they sometimes expressed their ideological views, but reluctantly and with great caution. For the most part, the Soviets and Americans were cordial toward one another. Some became

[20] Cohen, *The Forgotten War*, vol. 1, p. 45.

[21] Bill Schoeppe, hand-written correspondence, dated 01/27/93, Dolitsky's private collection.

[22] Bill Schoeppe, hand-written correspondence, 1993, 1995; Randy Acord, a test pilot of the Cold Weather Testing Detachment in Fairbanks from 1942–45, personal communication 1992–95 and 2006; Victor Glazkov, a radio operator of C-47 aircraft on the ALSIB route from 1942–45, hand-written memoirs, dated 03/25/91. Dolitsky's private collection.

[23] Bill Schoeppe, hand-written correspondence, dated 01/27/93. Dolitsky's private collection.

Soviet and American officers and enlisted personnel mix under the wing of an Li-2 transport plane in Nome upon arrival of the first contingent of the Soviet Military Mission. September 3, 1942. Courtesy of USAF.

close acquaintances during and after the war, leaving a lasting mark of good memories and affection for one another.[24] As Bill Schoeppe wrote:

> *Whenever there was a gang of pilots in town waiting for airplanes, they roamed the streets of Fairbanks, some buying women's silk stockings and underwear. Most unusual was their use of perfume! Some rough-bearded guys in britches and fine leather boots, wearing heavy perfume while partying, which we did every now and again. All men, only lots of drinks and smoking, and all these guys loaded with perfume! Some said it was because they had no antiperspirant! We'll never forget that high consumption of liquor. All Alaskans and U.S. military personnel drank excessive quantities of alcohol, but the Red Army men beat us by far. Without fail, the Russians laid on the greatest variety and quantity. Each party table in mess halls, most seating 4 to 6 men, contained lots of spiced food and at least 5 to 6 quarts of liquor.*
>
> *The Russian hosts always kept the liquor flowing, so the big restaurant-size glasses were seldom empty. "Down the Hatch" was the constant order as toasts were proposed to Stalin and Roosevelt! These parties usually ended in 2 to 3 hours. We were always amazed how the Russians could put away so much more liquor than Americans.*
>
> *A few times we were entertained by some fine male dancing: wild whirling and jumping, the Gypsy dances were outstanding. Remember especially the pace the musician kept—until they had to step out because they were exhausted!*[25]

[24] Bill Schoeppe and Randy Acord, personal communication, 1993, 1995 and 1998; Charles Binkley, a river boat pilot on the Chena River, Fairbanks (1942–45), personal communication, 1993, 1996 and 1998; Victor Glazkov, hand-written memoirs, dated 03/25/91. Dolitsky's private collection.

[25] Bill Schoeppe, hand-written correspondence, dated 01/27/93. Dolitsky's private collection.

Schoeppe also recalled his occasional meetings with the Soviet Captain Mikhail Gubin, an engineer of the Nome permanent garrison, when both were stationed in Nome. Evidently, Bill Schoeppe did not know at that time that Captain Gubin was a Soviet intelligence officer.[26]

Bill Schoeppe, an employee of Star Aviation, in Anchorage in 1940, prior to his deployment to Ladd Army Airfield in 1942. Alexander Dolitsky's collection via Karl Schoeppe.

> *Captain Gubin: engineer-officer in Nome, very friendly, nice fellow; he and his wife and two children lived off base in a small house near the city's center. I lived in a hotel with 3 other factory representatives, and I spent several nice Sundays in the Gubins' home for dinner and drinks. Remember one Sunday so well, friendly conversation with many husky drinks; he spoke good English and we spent many hours talking politics and comparing our forms of governments. Stalin, of course, was a big hero, always a toast for Stalin and Roosevelt!*
>
> *The captain's wife didn't speak much English but she kept apologizing for the poor furnishings, dishes, and silver.*
>
> *One Sunday, I remember so well, following several drinks we came to the table and large bowls of soup were served, and I assumed that was it! But then the main course was served—a huge beef tongue and vegetables, and dark bread! This is a rich meat, and everyone had to be served seconds. I did not think I would be able to stand up!*
>
> *I've often thought how rough those times were for the captain's wife—unable to speak English, with two young kids in a small house, no running water and no sewer system, going from house to house with horse drawn sled in the winter.*[27]

Bill Schoeppe in December of 1993, in Juneau, Alaska. Alexander Dolitsky's collection.

Despite occasional friendly meetings between Soviet and American personnel, Soviet insistence that the planes be in perfect condition before being flown to Siberia caused constant delays and some antagonism between the two commands. Bill Schoeppe also noticed the appearance of many FBI agents, particularly when Soviet top brass were visiting. He recalled:

> *So many things happened in those times and sabotage was blamed too often. For example, the P-39 and P-63 pursuit planes were powered with V-12 liquid-cooled Allison engines; so much trouble was encountered, especially during extremely cold weather. These engines had to be warmed at a very high idle; if not, the spark plugs would foul badly. When the temperature is minus 40–50° ... there are many problems. Each engine has 24 spark plugs. 24 x 30 = 720 plugs to be changed, and it causes lots of trouble. Usually these plugs would be sand*

[26] Hays, *The Alaska–Siberia Connection*, p. 171.

[27] Bill Schoeppe, hand-written correspondence, dated 12/17/93. Dolitsky's private collection.

blasted and checked, but for a time the Russians thought they were sabotaged and demanded all replacement plugs be factory new . . .

I recall one comical incident: a P-39 had been grounded in Edmonton; the V-12 engine was mounted behind the pilot, and a big carburetor mounted on top—between banks and cylinders. One of the mechanics placed a silk cloth over the carburetor to prevent parts falling into the engine. When repairs were complete, someone put the cowl-cover over the engine and forgot to remove the silk-cover. When the pilot reported low power on arrival to Fairbanks, he joked, "Sabotage again!"[28]

Tragically, many aircraft operated by both Soviet and American pilots crashed, mainly because of weather conditions, but also due to poor maintenance, overloading, lack of fuel, and pilot error—sometimes traceable to over-consumption of hard liquor by Soviet pilots the day before a long and dangerous journey. As Bill Schoeppe recalled, the winter of 1942–43 was extremely cold in Alaska. In order to prevent mechanical failure, planes had to be winterized—in very difficult working conditions—before they could be flown out.

Soviet pilots in Fairbanks, Cushman Street, 1944. Courtesy of Ted Spencer.

There is nothing like a perky dance. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

[28] Ibid.

We had no idea of the number of aircraft that were lost along the ferry route from Edmonton to Whitehorse and Fairbanks due to heavy smoke from forest and muskeg fires, which went wild during the war. Zero visibility was common day after day. Our radio aids to navigation were very poor or nonexistent; this, with low-time, inexperienced pilots, made a tough combination. It was found that many airplanes had ended up 180 degrees off course and out of fuel, so a system of flying in ever-widening circles by rescue planes was initiated, and is still used today in wilderness areas.[29]

Between September 1942 and September 1945, 133 planes were lost in North America, and 44 in Siberia, along the Northwest and ALSIB air routes, due to severe weather conditions, mechanical problems, and pilot error—a total of 2.22 percent of the 7,983 planes that were delivered to the Soviets from Great Falls.[30]

In his memoirs, published in the following chapter of this volume, Victor Glazkov, a Soviet radio operator on Li-2 and C-47 aircraft who worked along the ALSIB route from 1942 to 1945, writes:

There could have been fewer plane crashes if our [Soviet] ferry pilots had followed strict flight manual rules and instructions in flying Lend-Lease aircraft. If they had more thoroughly studied the technical characteristics of the American planes which, in fact, were very reliable and of good quality, and had

Soviet "enlisted pilots" at Ladd Army Airfield near a Russian-built Li-2. On the right is radio operator Victor Glazkov. Fairbanks, fall of 1942. Warren E. Boyle photo via Ivan Negenblya.

[29] Bill Schoeppe, hand-written correspondence dated 01/27/93, Dolitsky's private collection.

[30] Cohen, *The Forgotten War*, p. 46; Oleg Chechin, "Rescue of a Soviet Navigator," *Soviet Life*, no. 11, 1989, pp. 39–42; E. E. Jr. Furler, "Beneath the Midnight Sun," *Air Classics*, 20:3, 1984, pp. 25–34; Ivan Negenblya, *Alyaska–Sibir: Trassa Muzhestva* [Alaska–Siberia: the Road of Courage], Yakutsk, 2000 [hereinafter Negenblya, *Alyaska–Sibir: Trassa Muzhestva*], pp. 100, 168.

properly used them, fewer lives would have been lost. The severe weather conditions of the northern latitudes also contributed to accidents, especially during the fall and winter period... The practice of consuming alcohol before and after flights by some [Soviet] ferry pilots led to fatigue on the ALSIB route and caused many accidents and deadly losses of the planes.[31]

Uneasy Allies: Trust, but Verify

In four years of war, the United States supplied 14,798 combat aircraft to the Soviet Union. More than half (7,925) of the planes were flown over the Northwest Route across Canada and Alaska and accepted at Ladd Army Airfield in Fairbanks by Russian inspectors.[32] Looking back, some American military experts questioned whether the Soviets needed all of these aircraft. By the end of 1943, the USSR was building a great number of planes in factories in the Ural Mountains and already had technical military superiority over its enemies.[33] In 1943, Soviet industry produced 35,000 airplanes and 24,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, compared with 25,000 airplanes and 18,000 tanks produced by Germany.[34] In fact, despite its smaller industrial capacity and a reduced base of strategic raw materials, the Soviet Union still produced more military equipment than Germany overall, with a total output during the war of 137,000 aircraft (including 112,100 combat planes), 104,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 488,000 artillery pieces.[35]

An American engineer explains to Senior Lt. Gregory Smirnov (second from left) and Capt. N. Borovikov (right), both aircraft electrical systems specialists, through Russian interpreter Elena Makarova (left), the intricacies of the A-20 light bomber. Fairbanks, 1943. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

According to some military analysts and American participants in the program, the Soviet Union was stockpiling Lend-Lease equipment for post-war use, and probably used the air route for espionage.[36] During the Korean War (1950–53), American soldiers reportedly were puzzled to encounter so much American equipment (e.g., jeeps, trucks) on the enemy's side.[37] Evidently, the Chinese and Soviets provided military aid to North Korea using the very same supplies they had received from the United States several years earlier. American analysts have yet to grasp the full extent and intention of Soviet secrecy during WWII on matters ranging from combat operations to agricultural production.

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[31] Victor Glazkov memoirs, dated 03/25/91. *See* pp. 79–80, *infra.*

[32] Jones, *The Roads to Russia*, Table 2, p. 272 (this does not include PBN and PBY patrol planes); Hays, *The Alaska-Siberia Connection*, p. 167.

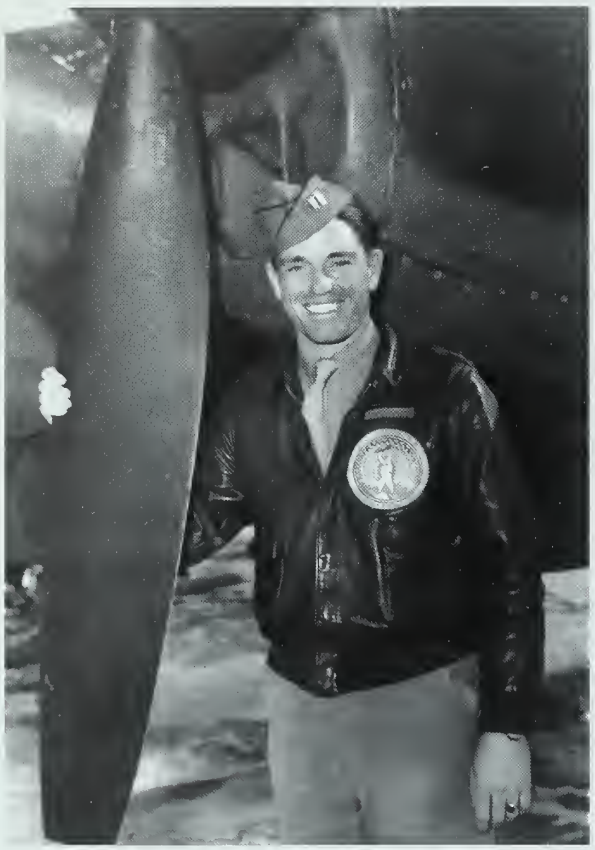
[33] George Racey Jordan, *From Major Jordan's Diaries*. New York, 1952 [hereinafter Jordan, *Diaries*], pp. 126–27.

[34] A. M. Soskin *Istoriya KPSS*, p. 50.

[35] Kim, *History of the USSR*, p. 397.

[36] Randy Acord, personal communication, 1993, 2006.

[37] Gerald Dorsher, a veteran of the Korean War, personal communication, 1993, 2006.



Randy Acord, test pilot for the U.S. Army Air Forces, Cold Weather Testing Detachment, Ladd Army Airfield, Fairbanks, 1944. Alexander Dolitsky's collection via Randy Acord.

Information would often have to come directly from Stalin, which led some officials to conclude he "apparently was the only individual in the Soviet Union who had the authority to give some information."[38] Some American military experts have alleged that uranium was shipped through Great Falls, and it was also suspected that in May of 1944 U.S. Treasury banknote plates had gone up the air route.[39] Those who worked on the U.S. side of the operation tend to debunk claims of Soviet conspiracy.[40]

Much information attesting to the helpful U.S. attitude toward the USSR and vice versa during the war remains unknown to the general American public. Assertions by post-war commentators that a thorough evaluation of the program might uncover some embarrassing facts likely are due more to the later context of the Cold War and to global foreign affair policies that began during the Truman presidency than to any widespread wrongdoing having actually occurred during the war. This became clear during the U.S. House of Representatives hearing on Lend-Lease matters held during the McCarthy era of the early 1950s, which was tainted with exaggerations and fabrications by members seeking to persecute liberal historians, radical socialists, and anyone perceived as sympathetic to the Soviet Union.[41]

Lend-Lease Supply to the Soviet Union

About $11 billion in war materials and other supplies were shipped to the Soviet Union from the United States over four major routes between 1941 and 1945. In addition to military equipment, the USSR received such non-military items as cigarette cases, records, women's compacts, fishing tackle, dolls, playground equipment, cosmetics, food, and even 13,328 sets of false teeth. Soviet requests for food emphasized canned meat *(tushonka),* fats, dried peas and beans, potato chips, powdered soups and eggs, dehydrated fruits and vegetables, and other packaged food items.[42] Dehydration, which made shipping food to the Soviet Union possible under the program, led to a rapid expansion of American dehydrating facilities, which eventually influenced the domestic market and the diet of American people in the post-war period.[43]

[38] van Tuyll, *Feeding the Bear,* p. 13.

[39] Jordan, *Diaries,* p. 217.

[40] Bill Schoeppe, personal communication, correspondence, and audiotapes, 1993, 1995, Dolitsky's private collection.

[41] Jay H. Moor, *World War II in Alaska: The Northwest Route. A Bibliography and Guide to Primary Sources,* Alaska Historical Commission Studies in History, no. 175, Anchorage, AK: Alaska Historical Commission, 1985, p.4.

[42] *Tushonka,* a stewed and canned meat (usually pork-based but later also beef-based), was prepared by well-known American meat packers in accordance with a recipe provided by the Soviets and supplied to them in enormous quantities through Lend-Lease. van Tuyll, *Feeding the Bear,* pp. 152–80.

[43] Alexander Dolitsky, "The Alaska–Siberia Lend-Lease Program," in *Alaska at War, 1941-1945,* ed. Fern Chandonnet, Anchorage, AK, 1995, p. 337.

Lend-Lease accounts show that, in 1945 alone, about 5,100,000 tons of foodstuffs left for the Soviet Union from the United States; that year, the Soviets' own total agricultural output reached approximately 53,500,000 tons.[44] If the 12 million individual members of the Soviet Army received all of the foodstuffs that arrived in the USSR through Lend-Lease deliveries from the United States, each man and woman would have been supplied with more than half a pound of concentrated food per day for the duration of the war. Without a doubt, Lend-Lease food proved vital to the maintenance of adequate nutrition levels for Soviets and other Lend-Lease beneficiaries. In 1944, two percent of the United States' food supply was exported to the Soviet Union, four percent to other Lend-Lease recipients, one percent to commercial exports, and 13 percent to the United States military. This aid was made possible due to sacrifices made by the American people and an enormous increase in American agricultural and industrial production—up 280 percent by 1944 over the 1935–39 average.[45] Between 1939 and 1945, America's gross national product soared from $90 billion to $212 billion; altogether the United States spent over $315 billion on its war effort.[46] It has been estimated that approximately 50 million Americans (about one-third of America's population at the time), including 12 million U.S. troops, participated in the war between 1941 and 1945.[47]

Although the Soviet government tried to minimize the importance of Lend-Lease support by arguing that U.S. supplies to the USSR represented only 4–10 percent of total Soviet production during the war, the aid items were in fact essential for that nation's survival. For example, while Soviet production of steel was about 9,000,000 tons in 1942, under Lend-Lease, the Soviet Union received about 30 percent, or 3,000,000 tons of steel. The Soviet T-34 tank engine and Soviet aircraft

Soviet and American officers at Nome, Alaska, in 1942. Courtesy of Ted Spencer.

[44] Jones, *The Roads to Russia*, p. 218.

[45] Ibid., p. 268.

[46] *Prologue*, National Archive and Records Administration, "World War II on the Home Front," Fall 1991, p. 229.

[47] *Soldiers*, U.S. Army Magazine, "World War II: Firing Up the Home Front," March 1992, p. 46.

P-39 assembly line at the Bell Aircraft Company in Buffalo, N.Y., 1944. Courtesy of the Niagara Aerospace Museum Collection, Niagara Falls, N.Y., via Ilya Grinberg.

used Lend-Lease aluminum. Copper shipments (about 4,000,000 tons) equaled three-quarters of the entire Soviet copper production for the years 1941–44. About 800,000 tons of non-ferrous metals (e.g., magnesium, nickel, zinc, lead, tin), 1,000,000 miles of field telegraph wire, 2,120 miles of marine cable, and 1,140 miles of submarine cable formed an impressive figure, especially when compared to Soviet production.[48]

The Soviet Union also received essential military items under the Lend-Lease Agreement: 14,798 aircraft (not including PBN and PBY patrol planes) from the United States, and nearly 4,570 combat aircraft from Great Britain (equivalent to 17 percent of the 112,100 combat aircraft produced in Soviet plants); 9,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, or 10 percent of the Soviet production; 47,238 jeeps; and 362,288 trucks (compared to the 128,000 trucks manufactured in the Soviet Union during those four years of the war).[49] All of this equipment greatly contributed to the mobility and survival of the Red Army. Unfortunately, many of these materials deteriorated due to poor maintenance or were wastefully stockpiled due to Soviet carelessness and inefficient infrastructure. Nevertheless, most of the materials were widely used and often admired by Red Army soldiers. In fact, Soviet air ace and three times Hero of the Soviet Union, the legendary Aleksandr Pokryshkin, used a Lend-Lease P-39 Airacobra to shoot down 48 of the 59 Nazi planes credited to him; Grigory Rechkalov, the second highest scoring Allied ace of World War II, shot down 47 of the 61 enemy planes credited to him using the P-39 Airacobra, as well.[50] In 1944, *Time* magazine reported that:

[48] Jones, *The Roads to Russia*, pp. 215–39, Tables I and II, pp. 270–78; van Tuyll, *Feeding the Bear*, pp. 94–103, 114–21, 152–82.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Jones, *The Roads to Russia*, p. 236; George Mellinger and John Stanaway, *P-39 Airacobra Aces of World War 2*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2001, pp. 76–77, 88; Lt. Col. Pokryshkin's son Alexander Pokryshkin, personal communication with Alexander B. Dolitsky, Moscow, Soviet Union, June 1991.

P-39 and P-63 assembly line at the Bell Aircraft Company in Buffalo, N.Y., 1944. Courtesy of the Niagara Aerospace Museum Collection, Niagara Falls, N.Y., via Ilya Grinberg.

> *Russian fighter pilots are tremendously fond of the U.S.-built Bell Airacobra, which they call Cobrushka ("Little Cobra"); they have more than 4,000 of them. The Russians were profoundly uninterested in U.S. criticism of Cobrushka on the grounds that it could not fight at high altitude; like any other tactical air force, the Russians do nearly all their fighting below 15,000 ft. Nearly all of the top-scoring Red aces fly Airacobras.*[51]

Many non-military and military items were funneled through Great Falls, and the United States reportedly received payment from the USSR for only a small fraction of these items. However, Ladd Army Airfield airplane mechanic Bill Schoeppe knew of two airplanes loaded with 10,000 pounds of gold, valued at about $5.6 million at the time, that traveled from Siberia to the Lower 48 in 1943.

> *I have been in many discussions about payment for equipment, and I can say I was in two planeloads of gold bullion on the way to Washington, D.C. In each case, the cabin floor was covered with gold, over 5,000 lbs. each. How many more shipments? I don't know.*[52]

No written record has been found thus far of that transaction or of other transactions of a similar nature, as the records of the Foreign Economic Administration's (FEA) Division of Soviet Supply (DSS) have disappeared. The National Archives does not have them and neither does the Department of State.[53] Many of the FEA records were inadvertently shredded in the early 1970s, and DSS records may have been among those destroyed.[54]

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[51] *Time*, "World Battlefronts," July 31, 1944, vol. XLIV, no. 5, p. 19.

[52] Bill Schoeppe, personal communication, hand-written correspondence, and audiotapes, dated 01/27/93.

[53] Alexander B. Dolitsky, personal inquiry at the National Archives in Washington D.C., 1993.

[54] Jay H. Moor, *World War II in Alaska: The Northwest Route. A Bibliography and Guide to Primary Sources*, Alaska Historical Commission Studies in History, no. 175, Anchorage, AK: Alaska Historical Commission, 1985, p. 16.

Soviet BOX SCORE

Red Air Force Officials Reveal That Ten Top Russian Airacobra Aces Have Downed 294 Enemy Planes While Flying P-39s.

Prominent in the headlines has been news of the exploits of the Allied ace of aces, Lieutenant Colonel Alexandre Pokryshkin of the Red Air Force, whose official total of enemy planes shot down in combat is 59.

Now it bas been revealed by Soviet officials that 48 of the 59 planes were downed while the Russian flier was piloting P-39 Airacobras. The report was contained in a letter written by Lieutenant General L. C. Rudenko, chairman of the Government Purchasing Commission of the Soviet Union, at tbe direction of the People's Commissar, Anastas Mikoyan, to President Lawrence D. Bell of Bell Aircraft.

General Rudenko also listed the names of nine other Soviet airmen—all Heroes of the USSR and all officers of the famous Guards unit—who have destroyed in combat 20 or more enemy planes while flying 'Cobras.

The outstanding record established by these Russian aces indicates that the airmen of the Soviet have been putting to good use the nearly 5,000 Airacobras which have been delivered to them—about half of all the American planes sent to the Red Air Force to help wage war against the nazis.

The ten Russian aces and their records while flying 'Cobras.

Lieutenant Colonel A. I. Pokrysbkin,	48 planes
Captain G. A. Rechkalov	44 planes
Captain N. T. Guliaev	36 planes
Major G. P. Glinka	33 planes
Major B. B. Glinka	26 planes
Captain A. F. Klubov	24 planes
Captain M. S. Komelkov	23 planes
Lieutenant I. I. Babak	21 planes
First Lieutenant A. I. Trud	20 planes
Captain P. N. Komosin	19 planes

and five airplanes credited to the group.

Colonel I. Dzusov, commanding officer of the Guards unit famous Soviet flying group, describes a victory against nazi airmen to some of his comrades. Left to right: Captain K. Vishnovsky, Lieutenant Colonel Alexandre Pokryshkin, Captain N. Lavitsky, Major G. P. Glinka, Major B. B. Glinka, Colonel Dzusov, Lieutenant I. I. Bubak and Captain G. A. Rechkalov.

"Soviet Box Score," Bellringer *magazine, a publication of the Bell Aircraft Company in Buffalo, NY. September, 1944. Courtesy of the Niagara Aerospace Museum collection, Niagara Falls, N.Y., via Ilya Grinberg.*

Thanks, But No Thanks

The Lend-Lease program marked a turning point in World War II. Over the past 25 years, many historians and government officials have recognized the crucial importance of the program in winning the war.[55] The program's delivery of combat aircraft over the ALSIB Air Route was indisputably one of its greatest achievements. Many Alaskans worked together with Soviets on the cooperative program. Although the two nations still faced possible invasion by the Japanese, the work taking place along the ALSIB route instilled new hope for victory shared in common by all of those involved, whether American or Soviet. Just a few months after the tide of war turned in favor of the Allies, however, expectations of continued post-war cooperation would again succumb to mutual suspicion and antagonism.

Over the course of World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt served as an inspirational political leader who held the Allies together against their enemies and, through implementation of the Lend-Lease program, forged an alliance with the Soviet Union that proved essential to victory. During his tenure, Roosevelt gambled four times on war-related affairs. He predicted Britain's survival, and he was right. He believed that the Soviet Union would withstand German attack, and he was right again. He was confident that Germany and Japan would eventually be defeated, and he was right a third time. He further speculated that by not attaching a dollar sign or political strings to aid to the Soviet Union, he could secure its friendship and cooperation after the war. On this issue, he was mistaken.

Roosevelt believed that his administration's good intentions would change the communists' view of capitalist countries, entertaining an illusion that Lend-Lease operations had opened a channel of communication with the Soviet people, which would eventually cause democracy in the Soviet Union to flourish, leading to an eventual partnership with the West. In reality, such a channel of communication had been opened with merely one Soviet—Joseph Stalin. As reported by Boris A. Dolitsky, a Soviet Army officer who defended Moscow in 1941 and later was stationed in Chita of the Cis-Baykal region in southern Siberia from 1942 to 1947, not many Soviets knew much about the magnitude of American Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union during the war or the sacrifices made by Americans to accomplish the goals of the program.[56]

Relying on unwritten rules of political reciprocity, Roosevelt was often puzzled by the Soviet government's refusal to permit Western allies to send military observers and technicians to Siberia and the Eastern Front. While he resisted the USSR's vigorous insistence that he open a second front in Europe early in the war, U.S. involvement in Allied military activities in the Pacific and North African theaters and in the Lend-Lease convoys to Europe in fact diverted significant enemy forces from the Eastern Front in Europe.

Sometimes Roosevelt expressed irritation that the Soviets could not understand the complexity of the logistics of Lend-Lease deliveries to the Soviet Union; further, the U.S. Congress and 49 percent of the American people expressed persistent reluctance to support Soviet aid, and 54 percent felt that recipients should pay for the aid received.[57] The American administration often quarreled with the Soviets about delivery schedules. The Soviets actually refused to open the ALSIB Air Route until August of 1942, when they finally realized that they might not have other alternatives. In addition, Soviet authorities insisted on more rigid specifications for the war equipment than did, for instance, the war offices of the United Kingdom. As a result of myriad complications and frequent miscommunications, American officials, who were unable to observe directly how Western-supplied equipment was being used, were often forced to rely on rather vague and generalized reports by Soviet authorities asserting

[55] Alexander B. Dolitsky, "We Flew in the Same Sky," in Dolitsky, ed. *Allies in Wartime*, pp. 99–100; Hardesty and Grinberg, *Red Phoenix Rising*.

[56] Boris A. Dolitsky, the author's father and Soviet Army officer from 1939 to 1947, personal communication, Philadelphia 1993, 1995.

[57] Jones, *The Roads to Russia*, pp. 254-56.

that the great quantities of American equipment were being used in the 1945 offensive.[58]

During the war, Soviet officials were reluctant to acknowledge, either in the press or in public, the support they received from the United States; at the end of the war, the Soviet government purported the role of Lend-Lease aid to be an insignificant four percent of the total industrial production of Soviet enterprises. Soviet industrial production, in general, has often been exaggerated to demonstrate the accomplishments and advantages of the Soviet Socialist State. On June 19, 1962, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, asserted, "during World War II American monopolists made billions of dollars on war deliveries. They fattened themselves on the blood of the people lost during two world wars."[59] Soviet historians painted the aid program as an effort to expand American imperialism and use Soviet resistance for the West's own mobilization.

Soviet efforts to minimize the role of the Lend-Lease program may have been motivated by considerations of national prestige and image. Only recently have Russian scholars begun to note the significant contributions of Lend-Lease supplies to the war effort. Although during the war the Soviet government gave decorations to a number of Westerners, and it recently honored seamen who had served on the Murmansk run, they still emphasize the small size of Lend-Lease aid in relation to Soviet production and the heroism of the Soviet people in delivering Lend-Lease supplies.[60] To fully understand the complexity of the Soviet attitude toward Lend-Lease operations, one must regard the subject in the context of Russian and Soviet history, politics, law, traditions, and behavioral psychology—matters extending far beyond the scope of the present work.

Negotiations for the Repayment of Lend-Lease Aid

The Lend-Lease program was a system of transfer to participating countries of military and other materials necessary for conducting the war. Countries receiving aid through the Lend-Lease program signed a bilateral agreement with the U.S., stipulating that materials destroyed, lost, or used during the war would not be subject to any repayment whatsoever after the end of the war. Materials left over after the war that were deemed suitable to the needs of the population would be subject to repayment in full or in part by means of long-term credit. Military materials left after the war could be reclaimed by the U.S. government (although the U.S. government repeatedly declared that it would not make use of that right). Equipment and materials ordered but not delivered by the end of the war could be acquired by the ordering country with long-term American credits. In their turn, countries entering into the Lend-Lease contract took upon themselves the obligation to render help to the United States with materials at their disposal.[61]

All in all, during the years of the war, the United States made Lend-Lease deliveries to 42 countries, amounting to a worth of nearly $50 billion dollars. In return, the U.S. received goods and services—and, ultimately, repayments totaling $7.4 billion dollars. Of the overall sum of Lend-Lease help, Great Britain received nearly $31 billion, France about $1.5 billion, and the Nationalist-controlled regions of China about $600 million. The entire sum of Lend-Lease deliveries to the USSR from 1941 to 1945, according to Soviet sources, amounted to about $10 billion in war materials and other supplies, approaching the $13 billion distributed to Western Europe under the post-war Marshall Plan.[62]

After the end of World War II, problems arose around the terms of payment for remaining Lend-Lease materials. The U.S. discontinued Lend-Lease deliveries to the USSR in September of 1945. A little over a year later, in December of 1946, the United States annulled the original agreement's

[58] Hays, *The Alaska-Siberia Connection;* Jones, *The Roads to Russia*; Richard Lukas, *Eagles East: The Army Air Forces and the Soviet Union, 1941-1945,* Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1970.

[59] Jones, *The Roads to Russia*, p. 249.

[60] Peter Petrov, "When We Were Allies," *Soviet Life*, part 1, March 1991, pp. 42–44; part 2, May 1991, pp. 18–19.

[61] *Diplomaticheskiy Slovar* [Diplomatic Dictionary], A. A. Gromyko, I. I. Zemskov, V. M. Khvostov, eds., vol. 2. Moscow: Politizdat, 1971, p. 173.

[62] Ibid., p. 174; $10 billion of Lend-Lease assistance in 1945 would be equivalent to around $200 billion in 2015.

stipulation allowing the USSR long-term credit for materials and equipment ordered under the Lend-Lease Agreement but not yet shipped. This unilateral annulment, claimed the Soviets, constituted a discriminatory attitude with respect to the USSR in settling the payments under the Lend-Lease Agreement. The U.S. was also accused of delaying negotiations on the issue.[63]

In negotiations with the United States in 1947 and 1948, 1951 and 1952, and at the beginning of 1960, the Soviet government asserted that the Soviet Union had had the greatest effect in securing an Allied victory in World War II; therefore, Soviet diplomats argued, it could not and would not accept discriminatory measures that would leave it in a position inferior to other Lend-Lease recipient nations. The Soviet representatives based their arguments on clauses in the Soviet–American agreement of June 11, 1942, stating that the conditions of the final settlement should be of such a nature as to conform to the common interests of the United States of America and the Soviet Union and to advance the creation and maintenance of peace in the world. The language of the pact also indicated its intention that Lend-Lease debt settlement conditions not hinder commerce but, rather, encourage mutually beneficial economic relations between the two nations.[64]

Accordingly, in negotiations that took place in Washington, D.C., in January of 1960, the Soviets insisted that the agreement settling Lend-Lease matters should be reached contemporaneously with the normalization of commercial and economic agreements between the USSR and the U.S. However, at that time, the U.S. expressed little desire to resolve the question, and the exchange of opinions between the representatives of the USSR and the U.S. was suspended.

Although settlements were made within 15 years of the termination of the Lend-Lease programs with most of the countries that had received aid from the United States, a settlement with the USSR would not be reached until the early 1970s when, on October 18, 1972, an "Agreement on the Disposition of Lend-Lease Supplies in Inventory or Procurement in the United States Between the United States and the USSR" was signed.[65] In the end, the United States accepted the Soviet Union's offer to pay $722 million in installments through 2001 to settle its debt. During Russian President Boris Yeltsin's visit to the United States in 1991, the parties revisited the agreement, with the Russian government agreeing to settle the balance with a payment of $674 million to the U.S. Treasury. This sum was finally paid to the U.S. by the Russian Federation in 2006.

ALSIB—A Turning Point in World War II

Too often, wars are described in terms of presidents and generals, emperors and kings, and grand strategies and elaborate campaigns. But wars affect the lives of all people—the soldiers who fight and the men, women, and children who support the effort from home. In the United States, the Lend-Lease Program, which would mark a turning point in World War II, was, essentially, a home-front undertaking.

A turning point in history is a point at which a very significant change occurs. Sometimes a turning point has immediate repercussions, making its significance obvious to people at the time it is occurring; at other times, the impact of an event becomes clear only in retrospect. A turning point can be a personal choice affecting millions; it can be an event or idea with global or local consequences; it can be the life of a single person who inspires or otherwise affects other people.

Many historians recognize the significant contribution the ALSIB Lend-Lease transports made to the Allied victory 70 years ago, yet few people outside the World War II veteran community now remember this air bridge between the United States and the former Soviet Union.[66] Nearly 8,000

[63] Ibid., p. 174.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Eduard A. Ivanyan, *Encyclopedia of Russian-American Relations (18th–20th Centuries)*. Moscow: International Relations, 2001, Appendix; Timeline of Russian-American Relations 18–20th Centuries, Embassy of the United States, Moscow, Russia.

[66] Dolitsky, *Allies in Wartime*; Hays, *The Alaska–Siberia Connection*.

Picture to remember: Soviet and American pilots near a P-63 KingCobra in Nome, Alaska, 1944.

combat aircraft were built in American factories and delivered to Soviet pilots in Alaska, where they were then flown to the Russian warfronts via the ALSIB and Krasnoyarsk air routes. There is no doubt that without the American airplanes and the supplies they carried, heroic Soviet pilots would not have achieved the same level of success. The use of American-built P-39 Airacobras by Rechkalov and Pokryshkin on their heroic missions provides but one example.[67]

The wartime Lend-Lease Agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, signed in Washington, D.C., on June 11, 1942, allowed the two countries to provide mutual assistance in fighting a war against aggression. Soviet and American pilots met each other in Alaska during the war, and the friendship and cooperation between the two nations during that period of history is now little remembered in the wake of 45 years of ill will during the Cold War (1946–91).

At a time when our two countries continue to struggle toward mutual cooperation, it seems fitting to remind all peace-seeking nations of the U.S. Lend-Lease Program and Soviet–American cooperation of the 1940s. The U.S. Lend-Lease Program, and the ALSIB Air Route in particular, played a vital part in the defeat of Nazi Germany and its Axis partners during World War II. The ALSIB Air Route has also established a tradition of cooperation across the Bering Strait that continues to this day.

[67] *See* p. 20, *supra*; citing Jones, *The Roads to Russia*, 236; George Mellinger and John Stanaway, *P-39 Airacobra Aces of World War 2*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2001, pp. 76–77, 88.

Looking Back and Looking Forward: Will the Past Predict the Future?

Who was responsible for post-war tensions between the U.S. and the USSR? Were they primarily a result of the Soviets' mistrust of a perceived intent on the part of the Allies to establish a "New World Order" and act as policeman of the world? The United States' influence in Asia, Europe, and North Africa at the end of the war was superior to that of any other nation. The U.S. government's interest in creating a military coalition (i.e., NATO in 1949) and in establishing military bases in strategic locations all over the world obviously attracted Stalin's attention. Did President Harry Truman misunderstand Stalin's psychological behavior at the end of the war? At the Potsdam Conference in July and August of 1945, Truman informed Stalin of the U.S.'s intention to use nuclear weapons against Japan. In Truman's view, he was just sharing this essential information with his closest war ally, but Stalin apparently interpreted this message as a potential threat to the Soviet state. Could termination of the Lend-Lease program to the USSR and other countries in September 1945, and Truman's approval of the Marshall Plan to assist Western Europe in 1947, have exacerbated Stalin's fears regarding U.S. post-war military expansion? In September of 1945, an American public poll showed that 49 percent of Americans supported Truman's termination of the Lend-Lease program; 58 percent of the respondents believed that the Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union should be repaid in full.[68]

Or were postwar tensions a result of Soviet communist expansionist ideology, a stated component of the Marxist–Leninist agenda? Questions surrounding the causes of post-war tensions between the U.S. and USSR are complex and must be studied objectively if we hope to elucidate the confrontational patterns between military powers in the past in order to avoid the resurgence of similar patterns in the future.

The history of Soviet–American relations has been quite short and somewhat intense. Evidently, President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved recognition of the Soviet Union in 1933, not out of any good will or political vision of peaceful cooperation with the Soviets, but for entirely pragmatic economic reasons. The Soviet Industrialization Plan required huge economic investments from the West, and in that Great Depression year of 1933, American manufacturers needed business wherever they could find it. In fact, in the 1930s, more than 200,000 unemployed Americans wrote to the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C., asking for work, and some of them were actually hired and emigrated from the U.S. to work in the Soviet Union. [69] Certainly, the Soviet government, in turn, hoped diplomatic ties would open doors for greater access to American bank loans and Western technology—and for greater export of socialist ideology at a time when membership in the Communist Party USA was growing.[70]

The post-war history of Soviet–American relations, seen from an American perspective, can be summarized as a series of Cold War cycles. The first cycle (1945–55) might be called the Truman–Stalin duel. This period coincided with the division of Germany and Europe, the Marshall Plan, the creation of NATO, the Warsaw Treaty, and the Korean War. The second cycle (1956–73) featured Khrushchev's nuclear threat, the expansion of socialist ideology into developing countries, the development of Soviet space technology as demonstrated by *Sputnik*, and the Soviet–Egyptian arms deal. The third cycle (1974–86) began with the self-destruction of an American president, Richard Nixon, via Watergate, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The United States then imposed a trade embargo and otherwise tried to isolate the USSR.[71] In the early 1980s, President Ronald Reagan and his administration challenged the Soviet government by enlarging the U.S. nuclear and conventional military arsenal. Attempts by the Soviets to compete with the military production of the United

[68] Jones, *The Roads to Russia*, p. 256.

[69] Tim Tzouliadis, 2008, *The Forsaken: The American Emigration to Soviet Russia*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2008, pp. 1–36.

[70] Ibid.

[71] W. W. Rostow, "On Ending the Cold War," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 65, no. 4, 1987, pp. 834–36.

States eventually devastated the Soviet economy and severely impacted its physical environment and natural resources.

In spite of all of the mutual animosity of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union never engaged in direct military action, fighting, at worst, by proxy. In fact, both American and Soviet leaders did a fairly good job of preventing a "hot war" between these two great nations, thereby preserving mankind for subsequent global challenges.

An analysis of the ALSIB Air Route demonstrates the need for a dynamic rather than static approach toward foreign neighbors whose political and economic systems differ from ours. The program demonstrated that two nations could compromise in their views and set aside conflicting cultural values and economic principles sufficient to achieve a common, mutually beneficial goal. A dynamic approach to dealing with potentially antagonistic neighbors, therefore, may help the United States government and United States citizens achieve favorable results in their exploration of new avenues for cultural, political, commercial, and military cooperation and exchanges with Russia and other former Soviet republics.

Picture to remember: Soviet and American officers at Nome, Alaska, in 1942. Courtesy of University of Alaska Anchorage.

We Flew in the Same Sky

The Alaska–Siberia Air Route in World War II

Victor D. Glazkov
Radio operator of a C-47 transport aircraft on the Alaska–Siberia Air Route in World War II from 1941 to 1945

Alexander B. Dolitsky and **James F. Gebhardt,** *editors*
James F. Gebhardt, *translator*

Initial Period of the Ferrying Operation

During the Second World War, in March 1941, the Congress of the United States passed the Lend-Lease Act, in accordance with which the USA transferred to the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition armaments, munitions, construction materials, strategic ores, medications, aircraft, and other material resources. After the entry of the USSR into the anti-Hitler coalition in June 1942, Lend-Lease deliveries were extended also to the Soviet Union.[1] During the entire period of the war, materials and equipment with a total value of about $11 million U.S. were delivered to the USSR.

Initially, the deliveries were accomplished by two routes. The *first* extended from ports of the American West Coast across the Pacific and Indian Oceans to the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf to the port of Basra [in present-day Iraq]. Passage by ship along this route required nearly two months. Aircraft were disassembled in the United States and packed into shipping containers. The shipping containers were moved by railroad from Basra, unloaded in Iran and, after assembly, the aircraft

[1] Editors's note: On 11 June 1942, "In Washington between the USSR and the USA [was] signed an agreement regarding the principles which would be utilized for mutual assistance during the conduct of the war against aggression. The government of the USA will continue to supply the USSR, in accordance with the 11 March 1941 Lend-Lease Act, with defense material, services, and information. Upon conclusion of the war, the USSR should return to the USA those defense materials, which have not been destroyed, expended, or utilized. On its side, in return, the USSR undertakes the obligation to assist in the defense of the USA and its reinforcement by providing the USA with the materiel, services, privileges and information in accordance with its capabilities." *Izvestiya*, 13 June 1942.

were ferried into the USSR to the front. The *second* route, somewhat shorter, was accompanied by exceptional risk, bravery, and losses. It extended from the eastern seaboard of the USA through Great Britain to Murmansk and beyond to Arkhangelsk. German submarines and aircraft, based in occupied Norway, actively contested the passage of vessels along this route. Therefore, the government of the USSR recommended [and approved] a new route for the delivery of aircraft by air—from Montana across Canada, Alaska, Chukotka, Western Siberia, and subsequently to the frontlines (*see* Figures 3 and 4).[2]

The extreme urgency displayed during the preparation and construction of airfields for the Fairbanks–Nome special air route and beyond, across the Bering Strait to Uelkal, Seymchan, Yakutsk, Kirensk, Krasnoyarsk, should be noted. In a dispatch of 17 June 1942, Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote to Joseph Stalin:

> *Ambassador Litvinov* [the Soviet ambassador to the U.S.] *has informed me that you have signified your approval of the movement of American planes via Alaska and Northern Siberia to the Western Front and I am pleased to receive this news.*[3]

In a dispatch on 1 July 1942, J. Stalin wrote to F.D. Roosevelt:

> *With reference to your latest messages, I should like to tell you that I fully concur with you as to the advisability of using the Alaska–Siberia Route for U.S. aircraft deliveries to the Western Front. The Soviet Government has, therefore, issued instructions for completing at the earliest possible date the preparations now under way in Siberia to receive aircraft, that is, for adapting the existing air fields and providing them with additional facilities. As to whose pilots should fly the aircraft from Alaska, I think the task can be entrusted, as the State Department once suggested, to Soviet pilots who could*

The laying of metal mats (pierced steel planking – PSP) for takeoff and landing strips (VPP) in Markovo, August 1943.

[2] Editor's note: The ferrying of aircraft from Montana across Canada to Alaska, and subsequently to Siberia, was suggested by President Roosevelt in May 1942, during an official visit to Washington, D.C. by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Vyacheslav Molotov.

[3] *Sovetsko-amerikanskiye otnosheniya vo vremena Velikoy Otechestvennoy voiny 1941–1945: dokumenty i materialy.* [Soviet–American Relations during the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945: Documents and Materials]. Moscow: Politizdat, 1984, vol. 1, p. 204.

travel to Nome or some other suitable place at the appointed time. An appropriate group of those pilots could be instructed to carry out the survey flight proposed by you. To fully ensure reception of the aircraft, we should like to know the number of planes, which the USA is allocating for dispatch to the Western Front by that route.[4]

The State Defense Committee (*GKO*) entrusted this effort to the chief of the Main Directorate of the Civilian Air Fleet (*GU GVF*), Major General Vasiliy Sergeevich Molokov. He created an authoritative commission, which in a brief period of time conducted the immense and difficult work to determine the waypoints of the air route, principal airfields where the ferrying regiments should be based, and the reserve airfields for landing of aircraft in the event of worsening weather conditions.[5]

Simultaneous with the preparation of the air route, which received the name Krasnoyarsk Air Route (*KVT*), a selection was made of specialists who would directly prepare the equipment and ferry it to the front. Here arose a psychological barrier. Any commander or leader of a unit or detachment, large or small, has painfully endured the "reshuffling" of his cadre. When a commander received instructions to designate a portion of his specialists and transfer them to another unit, he first of all attempted to get rid of those who were of less utility to him, for example, those who had only recently arrived from training institutions and did not have practical experience or specialists who were of average skill. This is clearly demonstrated by the example of the Moscow Special Purpose Aviation Group (*MAON*). When, in August 1942, an order came down from *GU GVF* to designate crews for the ferry route, the command of the group began to form crews from aircraft commanders, co-pilots, flight engineers, and on-board radio operators just arriving from rear-echelon aviation detachments of the flight center, who had not yet managed to don their military uniform and recognize the "charm" of front-line work. It would appear that the personnel department of *GU GVF* quickly figured out what such a "composition" of crews could lead to. From that realization, an instruction was issued to form the crews from specialists who had experience working in Siberia, Yakutia, and in the Far North, and also who had been born and lived in those regions and were physically prepared for severe climatic conditions. This sometimes led to absurd results: the crews were formed on the basis of paper records and their individual members often did not recognize each other.

Crews from *MAON* comprised the backbone of the 6th Transport Aviation Squadron (*TAE*), which subsequently, in June 1943, was reorganized into the 8th Transport Aviation Regiment (*TAP*). The permanent commander of the regiment was Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Alekseevich Pushchinsky, who was recommended as an outstanding combat pilot and skilled organizer. At the beginning of the war, he successfully led an aviation squadron that supported blockaded Leningrad with deliveries of provisions.

Relying on my memory, here are the names of the front-line pilots of the 6th Transport Squadron: ***Aircraft commanders***—Barkov, Dmitry Aleksandrovich; Benkunsky, Georgy Stanislavovich; Velichaev, Sergey Tikhonovich; Dobrovolsky, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich; Dzugutov, Mukhtarbek Moiseevich; Yeryomenko, Ivan Ivanovich; Zhuravlyov, Pavel Fyodorovich; Matveev, Pavel Petrovich; Maslyakov, Pyotr Aleksandrovich; Moiseev, Ivan Ivanovich; Ponomarenko, Fyodor Lukich; Spiridonov, Yevgeny Semyonovich; Khasaev, Roman Khasaevich; Yervyakov, Nikolay Pavlovich. ***Flight engineers***—Borisov, Panfil Nikolaevich; Glushkov, Dmitry; Dubovitsky, Nikolay Aleksandrovich; Deryabin, Leonid Aleksandrovich; Zhuk, Pyotr Iosifovich; Kolomytkin, Mikhail Fyodorovich; Koshukhov, Konstantin Ivanovich; Kudrenko, Fyodor Kondratyevich; Kurilenko, Aleksandr Petrovich; Motorin, Fyodor Fedorovich; Maslovets, Konstantin Yakovlevich; Pronin, Fyodor Mikhaylovich; Sorokin,

[4] Ibid., p. 210. Editor's note: The *Western Front* in this context is the German–Soviet front, generally referred to as the *Eastern Front* in books and articles published in Western Europe and the United States.

[5] Editor's note: During the war years, in severe weather conditions, 26 airfields and 274 wooden buildings and structures were erected and equipped along the Krasnoyarsk Air Route in Western Siberia and the Russian Far East (*see* Ivan E. Negenblya, "Alaska-Siberia—the Route of Courage and Friendship," in Dolitsky, *Allies in Wartime*, 2007, p. 46).

Aleksey Petrovich; Shilov, Semyon Pavlovich. ***On-board radio operators***—Venediktov, Yevgeny Nikolaevich; Yelsukov, Viktor Mikhaylovich; Kondrashov, Mikhail Nikolaevich; Kuzmin, Aleksandr Fyodorovich; Kirienko, Nikolay Aleksandrovich; Maltsev, Aleksey Antonovich; Malakhov, Boris Ivanovich; Muravyov, Mikhail Kirillovich; Pekhota, Aleksandr Mitofanovich; Prokhvatinov, Georgy Petrovich; Popov, Ivan Vasilyevich; Fyodorov, Vladimir Mikhaylovich; Chikhareva, Mariya Vasilyevna. ***Co-pilots***—Anuryev, Nikolay Andreevich; Yeryomenko, Andrey Dmitrievich; Mokshantsev, Vladimir Aleksandrovich; Shchurov, Nikolay Ivanovich; Pivovarov, Boris Nikolaevich.

The number of co-pilots was inadequate, but the crews did not actually feel this absence because all the flight engineers and on-board radio operators were capable of controlling the aircraft. I recall my first flight to blockaded Leningrad as a member of the crew of Grigory Aleksandrovich Taran. Ten minutes after takeoff, he sat me down in the co-pilot's seat and began to teach me techniques of piloting the aircraft. Later I learned that *MAON* pilots had an unwritten rule—all members of the crew should be able to pilot the aircraft in any weather conditions, day or night, and, if necessary, execute a landing.

This did occur on one occasion: Aleksey I. Semenkov was executing a night-time combat mission and came under anti-aircraft fire while crossing the front line. Co-pilot A.A. Osipyan and flight engineer M.F. Krivenchuk were seriously wounded. Semenkov was also wounded in the arm and head. On-board radio operator P.Ya. Fomin assisted the co-pilot and flight engineer, carrying them into the fuselage of the aircraft, then occupied the co-pilot's seat, brought the aircraft to Khvoynaya, and successfully landed it. Though the grateful Aleksey Ivanovich Semenkov somehow let on that the on-board radio operator had never piloted the aircraft in a situation such as this, he said that he had displayed the capability. This, to put it mildly, was not quite accurate. We all were young. We all wanted to live, and if one of the crew members remained unharmed or lightly wounded, he should save both his comrades and the aircraft; that is, bring it home. The independent piloting of the aircraft by on-board radio operators and flight engineers was not to be publicized, because the command might impose punishment for such "initiative."

In the first half of August 1942, they sent us in groups to Moscow to apply for foreign passports. The first group of five crews under the command of Major V.A. Pushchinsky departed from Vnukovo airport to Yakutsk on 28 August. We reached Novosibirsk on the same day and, with an intermediate landing in Krasnoyarsk, arrived at Kirensk on the following day. We reached our new base at Yakutsk on 30 August.

What did we see here? The facilities at Yakutsk airfield consisted of an unimproved takeoff-landing strip (*VPP*), taxiways, and aircraft parking areas. The support services and office of the airport chief, A.Kh. Rone, were housed in a one-story, wooden barracks-type building, labeled as the headquarters. Opposite the headquarters was the hospital building, which had six rooms. In a small building closer to the *VPP* and next to a lake, was the headquarters of the 234th Aviation Detachment, and, just beyond that on a small hill, stood a small hanger and several R-6 (ANT-7), R-5, U-2, and S-2 aircraft. Across the road that led from the village Markha to Yakutsk stood a radio tower. The radio transmitter was located here as well. Two single-story barracks were being constructed on the airfield property, along with a dining facility for the personnel of the air route. The first five crews, "*Douglasisty*" [diminutive for the Soviet Li-2/C-47 crews] as they called us on the route, occupied the hostel in the port.[6]

The chief of the Krasnoyarsk Ferry Route, Colonel Ilya Pavlovich Mazuruk, arrived in Yakutsk on 2 September. We greeted him with great attention and interest. Having recently been a high school student, I had heard of his successes: Hero of the Soviet Union, famous polar pilot, a Deputy of the

[6] Editor's note: Yakutsk town is located south of the airfield on the left (west) bank of the Lena River. "Left bank" and "right bank" are standard European usages to define territory by standing with one's back toward a river's source, facing in the direction of current flow. The land to one's left is the "left bank" and the land to one's right is the "right bank." The Lena River flows north; therefore the left bank is the west bank.

Supreme Soviet of the USSR. This was my first personal meeting of I.P. Mazuruk.

The weather in Yakutsk on that day was clear. We departed for the airfield, and, several minutes later, a small black dot appeared in the sky. As it came closer, we saw the outline of a still unfamiliar to us B-25, an American bomber built by the North American Aviation Company.

Prior to this, I had imagined Mazuruk as a giant in a halo of glory; but what stood before us was a man of medium height, a well-proportioned individual in a crisp colonel's uniform with four buttonholes lined in blue.[7] His speech was unhurried and quiet, lacking command intonations. On his chest were his Hero of the Soviet Union Gold Star, the Order of Lenin, two Orders of the Red Banner, Order of the Red Star, and a badge denoting that he was a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

The commander, 1st Ferrying Air Division, Colonel Ilya P. Mazuruk.

Groups of ferry pilots began to arrive on 4-5 September. They were greeted very warmly. We all quickly became reacquainted or made friends, for the moment on account of common fates and interests. It is based on their stories that I am attempting to record where and how the formation of the ferrying aviation regiments occurred.

The ferrying regiments were formed in the city Ivanovo under the guidance of Colonel N.K. Romanov, who prior to this had been sent to air bases in the USA in order to study American equipment. The first personnel sent to the newly formed regiments were air crews who had ferried American aircraft from Iran to the front. Subsequently, the regiments were filled with flight and technical personnel from aviation regiments of the active army. Upon completion of all this work, the State Defense Committee named Colonel I.P. Mazuruk as the chief of the ferry route, motivated by the fact that he was an experienced polar pilot and very familiar with the severe working conditions in the North.

Here are Mazuruk's own words, spoken by him at a meeting in Moscow on 28 August 1985:

> *In August 1942, I was invited to the Kremlin to a session of the GKO, at which, in addition to other matters, was being examined the issue of possible routes [for] quickly moving American aircraft from east to west. Later that night I left the session, already in the position of chief of the air route and*

[7] Editor's note: The Red Army was founded immediately after the 1917 Russian Revolution when the Bolshevik Party came to power, but the official day of its creation is February 23, 1918. In August 1924, a blue service uniform was introduced to the Red Army Air Force, and this underwent modifications in December 1935. The basic uniform of the air force was the same as the uniform of the army, but with air force personnel being distinguished by their light sky blue collar patches and gold piping. This light blue coloring was later to appear on the shoulder straps. In 1943, however, a new uniform was introduced and adapted by the Soviet Army, including the Red Army Air Force, resembling the pre-revolutionary Imperial Russian uniform. Peter Darman, *Uniforms of World War II*, Edison, NJ, Chartwell Books, Inc., 1998, pp. 184-85.

commander of 1st Ferrying Regiment. Several days after my appointment, I arrived at the city Ivanovo, where the air regiments were already being formed. They were quickly sent by railroad to Krasnoyarsk, and from there by transport aircraft to the designated points of the air route.[8] *Upon arrival at their destinations, the air crews and all the personnel began urgent preparation for the upcoming effort.*

The high morale of the personnel prevailed everywhere. People rushed into action with impatience. Even while exercises were being conducted, the landing strips, airfield equipment, and support structures were assembled at a hurried pace. The order soon followed: begin ferrying operations by the October holiday.[9] From this moment was begun the intensive, heroic, and at times dangerous work of the air regiments on the Alaska–Siberia (ALSIB) Air Route. The flight crews and all the personnel clearly understood their tasks and accomplished them with feelings of great patriotism; by doing so, they hastened the arrival of the long-awaited victory. These tasks included the furnishing of foodstuffs, the designation of means of transportation, construction of airfield facilities, and cleaning of winter snow off the takeoff–landing fields. The second air route for delivery of personnel to Yakutsk went from the Skovorodino railway station.[10] This route and means were used primarily for engineer-technical personnel in G-2 aircraft.[11]

On 12 September, V.A. Pushchinsky, commander of the 6th *TAE* [*Transportnaya aviatsionnaya eskadriliya* (air transport squadron)], summoned the crew of commander P.F. Zhuravlyov, in which I was the on-board radio operator, and instructed us to accept transfer of Li-2 transport aircraft No. L-3947 from another crew.[12] We, of course, had dreamed of receiving a new American C-47 aircraft. But an order is an order, and we had to execute it.

On the following day, P.F. Zhuravlyov, aircraft commander, departed with flight crew to the village Seymchan, which was located on the left bank of the Kolyma River. In the interest of reinforcing the crew, given that we were flying this route for the first time, the co-pilot's seat was occupied by the experienced aircraft commander A.A. Dobrovolsky. The weather was clear, visibility "million by million," as our pilots were wont to say. Flying over Khandyga (Tyoplyy Klyuch), we saw on the field recaptured from the *tayga* a group of construction workers who were marking out the future reserve airfield of the ferry route. Next along the flight route would be Oymyakon airfield, which had also been prepared for reserve use.

We flew above the upper ridges of the Verkhoyansky Range. Below, in the canyons, flowed rivers, the names of which I did not know because they simply were not inscribed on the 15-km-scale aviation map. Pine forests grew along the slopes of the mountains; above, rose towering cliffs. I was seeing this for the first time in my life. The panorama was of utmost beauty. I shared my impressions with Dobrovolsky, who somewhat dampened my enthusiasm, saying that it was beautiful so long as our engines functioned normally. But, by God, if an engine should quit working, there was no place to land.

We proceeded along the route laid out on the map. The Indigirka River appeared; the map indicated the village of Oymyakon should be somewhere in this area. Mountains rose up to the right of us to the south, and to the left was an endless valley along which flowed the Indigirka River. We decided to go with the flow of the river. We had to find Oymyakon! After 10–15 minutes, flight engineer Stepan Pavlovich Shilov first spotted in the distance ahead some kind of structures, which, when we approached closer, we could see consisted of two houses, a large barn, and a cattle pen.

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[8] Editor's note: The 1st Ferrying Aviation Regiment was transported from Ivanovo to Fairbanks by air.

[9] Editor's note: The celebration of the 25 October 1917 Socialist Revolution.

[10] Editor's note: Skovorodino is about halfway between Lake Baykal and the Sea of Okhotsk, approximately 35 miles north of the Russian–Chinese international boundary. It began life as a railroad town early in the 20th century, when the Trans-Siberian Railway was built. It remains astride the Baykal–Amur *Magistral* (main line) and is the site of a recently constructed pipeline to move Russian petroleum products to northern China.

[11] Editor's note: The G-2, a transport variant of the TB-3 bomber, was also referred to in Soviet literature as the ANT-6.

[12] Editor's note: The Li-2 was a license-built copy of the Douglas DC-3/C-47 built in the Soviet Union.

The dwelling settlement of the Seymchan airfield. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

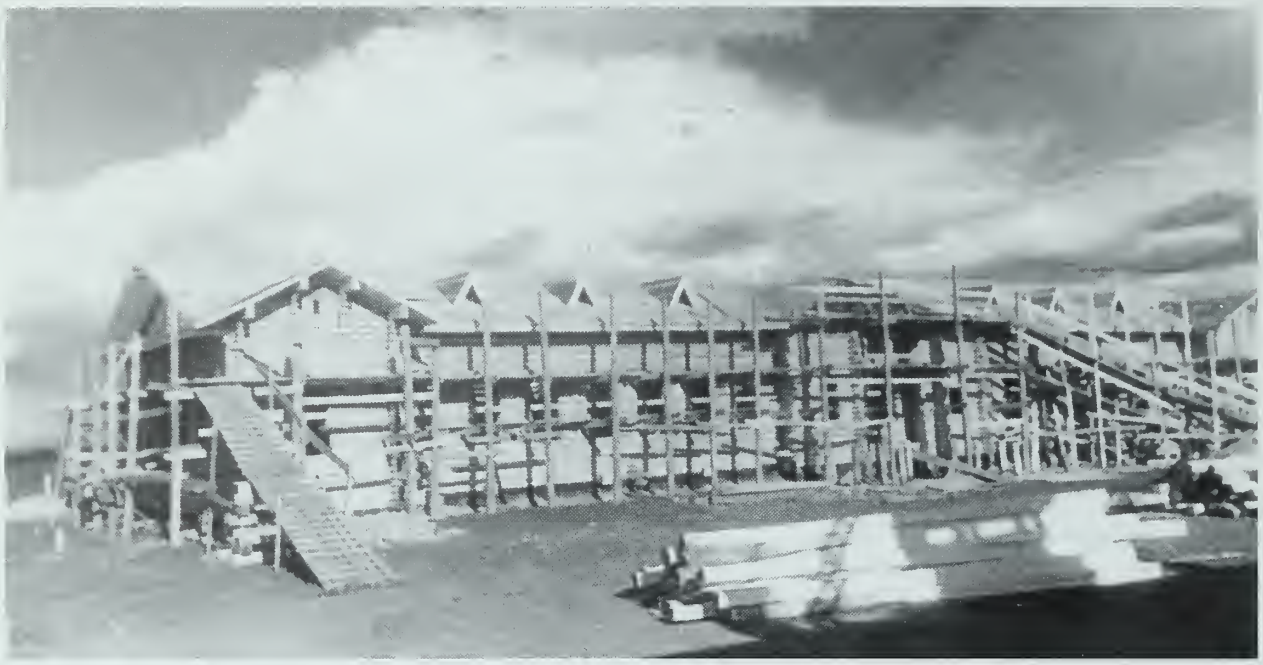
Nearby was a large level field, entirely suitable for receipt of aircraft; but it did not have any type of markings to confirm that this was an airfield. Two people came out of one of the houses, waving their arms, obviously greeting us. Zhuravlyov rocked his wings in response. Having marked the actual location of Oymyakon on the map and confirmed its precise location one more time, we took a course to Seymchan.

Using radio beaconing, we came out precisely at Seymchan. We had to circle the airfield a couple of times while the workers removed their tools, primarily shovels and wheelbarrows, from the *VPP*. Then, under the guidance of the chief of the airfield, Captain Samokhvalov, the landing "T" was positioned and our aircraft, bouncing on the uneven ground, rolled out on the half-prepared strip.

The parking spot designated for our aircraft was located near the forest; during our turn, the tail assembly of our aircraft became caught up in tree branches, causing minor damage to the cloth-covered (percale) elevator surface. The tear was quickly repaired. Going forward, I will say that the percale patches placed on the damaged surfaces were white in color, and really stood out against the background of the aircraft's camouflage color. The Americans photographed them when we arrived in Nome. Soon after that, they showed us a copy of *Life* magazine, where these photographs were displayed with a caption that these patches were testimony to the combat actions of the crew at the front. The Americans were not mistaken, because the crew consisted of front-line veterans and our Li-2 aircraft (L-3947) had scores of patches that covered holes received from fascist antiaircraft guns during front-line crossings. These had, however, been painted over and were not particularly visible to the naked eye.

In Seymchan we were provided temporary accommodations in the barracks of the Southwest Geological Directorate (*YuZGU*); soldiers were still building the hostel, dining facility, and club. They had sent the prisoners away somewhere for the time being.[13] Conditions were not particularly good,

[13] Editor's note: In 1940, after the Germans' successful *Blitzkrieg* in Denmark and Norway, the Soviet government decided to put into practice extensive programs of modern aircraft production. At the same time, a large program of building a network of airfields was approved. The program, which included 251 hard-surface airfields, was to



The hostel in Seymchan is still in scaffolding. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

but all of this was accepted with humor. No one expressed dissatisfaction; the craving for victory was the strongest impulse.

Since other aircraft were arriving with personnel, we received the mission to conduct a reconnaissance flight to Markovo airfield, located on the Anadyr River, in order to check on the readiness of the *VPP* for receipt of aircraft. We flew visual flight rules at an altitude of approximately 2,400–3,000 meters [7,875–9,850 feet] to permit a larger field of view of the surrounding terrain. I still remember that our flight maps were insufficiently precise. Only two radio-navigation sources were available—in Seymchan and Uelkal. Uelkal, located on the shore of Krest Inlet, was not yet prepared for the receipt of aircraft. They had just begun to construct its landing strip from squared wooden beams. This *VPP* was placed in service in March 1943.

Three hours into the flight, we calculated we should arrive at Markovo in 40 minutes. We would conduct a detailed orientation, checking the over-flown terrain against our flight map. We were maintaining radio communications only with Seymchan; Uelkal and Markovo were not responding to my calls. We spotted the river in front of us and were firmly convinced that this was the Anadyr, even though its configuration did not conform to what was shown on our map, because there was no other comparable river in Chukotka. Portions of the river valley were blanketed in fog, which to the northeast transitioned into a dense, low overcast. There were no signs of life.

We did not make contact with Markovo; obviously, they did not know of our flight from Seymchan. What should we do? If we continued to search for Markovo, we might run out of the fuel required to return to Seymchan. Then Uelkal called us and asked who we were and where were we going. We reported our data to them, took a radio bearing, requested a weather report, and asked Uelkal to maintain communications with us.

be completed by the end of 1941. The *NKVD* (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) would send nearly 400,000 prisoners to build the airfields, and the army some 100,000 soldiers (*The Program of Airfield Construction*, 1940, State Archive of the Russian Federation, Moscow, collection 8437, catalog 1, file 1, pp. 13-22); Yuriy Kilin, "The Birth of Soviet Globalism: The USSR's Military Activity in the Arctic and Sub-Arctic in 1920–1941," in *Aspects of Arctic and Sub-Arctic History*, Ingi Sigurdson and Jon Skapton, eds., Reykjavik: University of Iceland Press, 2000, pp. 456–57). Clearly, prisoner labor was being used for the construction of the ALSIB airfields in Siberia.

I transferred the bearing to the map. It turned out that we were right of the flight path, which meant that Markovo should be to our left. The commander requested a second bearing for accuracy. I took it and everything was correct. We needed to fly upstream along the river. The flight engineer was concerned about fuel and brought this to the pilot's attention. Dobrovolsky: "Vitya, ask Uelkal if they can receive us." I made the request. They responded that they could receive us on the spit where they were laying out the landing "T." I transmitted to Uelkal that they should continue to monitor us. We continued to search for Markovo.

We went up river, but after 30 minutes we had not observed anything that looked like Markovo. We spotted the right tributary of the Anadyr, the Yeropol River, then the second tributary, the Yablon River, and the village Yeropol with its 3 or 4 huts. That's it! It would be pointless to continue on. We took a course for Uelkal. Then the radio operator from Markovo came up on the air. He began to confirm that yes, we heard you, and then my receiver failed. The weather in Markovo was closed in—fog. We flew in to Uelkal at night.

On the approach to Uelkal, we immediately spotted the shoreline spit with the "T" landing marker laid out with white strips of cotton. We first made a "registration" pass, and then made our landing, which on account of my error could have ended in damaging the aircraft. Radio operator Ivan Mikhaylovich Lunyov warned me in advance not to brake after landing, because the spit was soft pebbles and the aircraft would sink into the soil up to 10 centimeters. I had already, as it later became clear, passed on to the pilots, "brake during landing." The pilots did just that, and the aircraft began to dig in at the nose. We heard a loud noise—the tips of the propellers were "chopping" at the pebbles. The pilots were experienced and immediately released the brakes. The aircraft leveled out, dropped down on its tail wheel, and, rolling out another 100–150 meters, came to a stop.

I took the blame for what had happened; judging by everything, a mistake had occurred. In more than a half-century of labor in Aeroflot, this was the first and only incidence of a blunder on my part. On Lunyov's advice, we left the aircraft on the spit.

Uelkal, a Chukchi village located on a low, sandy inlet beach covered in sparse lichens, consisted of one large wooden building, the boarding school, which, in addition, accommodated the village

The personnel of the 2nd PAP in Uelkal lived in these houses. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

council. Two teachers also lived there: a husband and wife. About 10 *yarangas* were scattered around the school.[14] The secretary of the village council met us and invited us to his tent. All this was quite interesting. From having read books about the North, I knew much pertaining to the customs, work, and lives of northern peoples, but this was my first opportunity to witness such things with my own eyes.

We spent the night on the airfield in so-called "Svinin's huts," which were shaped like an upright cylinder with a conical roof. They said that, with this construction, during a blizzard the snow smoothly enveloped the structure and did not create drifts. The huts were completely modern on the inside, even with some comforts; they were joined together in pairs with a covered passageway. There were six such huts on the airfield, and that was all.

A steamer stood in the roadstead of Krest Inlet, with a load of equipment and tools for construction of the *VPP*, living quarters, dining facility, service bays, and a club. An American military-type self-propelled barge was busy unloading. It was tied up to the shore by the bow, the forward portion of which opened and served as an unloading bridge. In this manner, fuel trucks, prime movers, tractors, heaters for pre-warming of aircraft engines, step ladders, tools, foodstuffs—everything necessary for servicing aircraft and crews in the extreme conditions of the Far North—was delivered to the shore. Drums for aviation gas and prefabricated wooden log cabins tied together in packets were tossed from the steamer directly into the sea and were carried to the shore by the surf. Later, soldier laborers gathered all these items together and moved them to building pads.

In the morning, having received the weather forecast for Markovo, we thanked Lunyov for his assistance and hospitality, took off, and set a course for Markovo. We did not see a single hut on the ground, not one village or nomad camp, for the entire two-hour flight. On all sides, as far as the eye could see, stretched monotonous tundra with countless numbers of lakes; only after we had flown across the Tanyurer River, a left tributary of the Anadyr, did forests begin to appear. It seems that in the fall of 1944, a *VPP* of steel landing mats delivered from the USA had been constructed at the mouth of the Tanyurer River.

We reached Markovo. The airfield was unfamiliar to us. We flew across the landing strip, where we observed Chukchi laborers working. The chief of the airfield, Captain Gayshin, requested that we make several circuits, so as to give him time to gather up the people from the landing strip. We descended to land, and, there on the landing strip, a dog suddenly appeared. Zhuravlyov gave it throttle and went around for a second attempt. We descended again, and the story was the same. It was obvious that the sound of our aircraft engines was causing the animals consternation, and they had begun to race around, seeking shelter.

The landing strip itself was almost fully prepared; only at the end was there a need to level the soil after digging out trees, for which they used workers from among the local populace. When we arrived in Seymchan, Zhuravlyov reported to Mazuruk the preparedness of Markovo to receive aircraft.

First Meetings in Alaska: So this is America . . .

The first foray into Alaska was prepared, with the first landing to occur in Nome. The flight was designated for 18 September. Four Li-2s, loaded with flight and command leadership personnel of the 1st Ferrying Aviation Regiment (*PAP*), took off and set a course for Markovo. The aircraft proceeded with a modest interval at the limits of visibility of each other. Our crew, which was familiar with this sector of the route, led the larger group. The lead navigator of *GY GVF*, Captain Gurevich, was made a member of our crew. We reached Markovo without any difficulty. Colonel Mazuruk arrived at Markovo some 10–20 minutes after our landing, in his American-built B-25 bomber.

Subsequent movement was halted. During the flight from Seymchan, they gave us a weather

[14] Editor's note: A *yaranga* is a barrel-roofed dwelling in the shape of a cone or round tent with a frame of poles covered with reindeer hides among nomads or with walrus hides among the coastal dwellers.

A Russian B-25 combat plane accompanied the first Soviet military mission, which arrived in Nome, Alaska, by Li-2 transport plane on September 3, 1942. Courtesy of Ted Spencer.

forecast for the Nome area with a tendency of lowering the lower edge of the overcast until the end of the forecast's effective period. In Markovo, due to the absence of radio communications, we were unable to receive a new forecast from the meteorologists. My efforts to contact Nome from the ground were unsuccessful because of the low power of the aircraft radio transmitter. Without these data, Mazuruk was unable to give authorization for the flight, since he felt great responsibility for the safe passage of our group flight. We were told to stand down until the next day.

Four *Duglasisty* crews were sent to the rest facility; all the wooden bunk beds had already been occupied by the ferry crews. We stood in the corridor, not knowing what to do. The chief of staff of 1st *PAP*, Lieutenant Colonel Tseytlin, appeared. He asked why the *Duglasisty* were not resting. We told him the reason. Tseytlin immediately led us to a resting room and there issued the command, "Well, you Stalin eagles, free up places for these *Duglasisty* to rest." On the whole, the ferry crews freed up some space, but there were among them some dissatisfied men who made reference to the table of ranks. Tseytlin, an intelligent and highly educated person, was forced to point out to these silly officers, like small, capricious children, that *GVF* pilots had their own table of ranks. "Today they have been working all day. Tomorrow they will undertake difficult work, and you, officer–ferry pilots, will be reclining in your aircraft in sleeping bags. Without the *GVF* pilots, we would not be flying to America and we would not be ferrying a single aircraft for the front. I ask you to clean up these accommodations!"

Zhuravlyov's aircraft took off first in the morning. Mazuruk asked him to make a large circle, in order that the three Li-2s following behind him could more quickly form up on him and not become spread out along the route. We flew in an "English cross," three aircraft in an echelon formation and the fourth behind the flagship, but higher, in order not to descend into the slipstream of the lead aircraft. We passed by Uelkal. The terrain beneath us was uniform: mountains, cliffs, countless small lakes, and not a single sapling. I saw standing fog in the valleys. For orientation, we used a bearing from Uelkal, which Ivan Mikhaylovich Lunyov (who, with his entire family, would perish in the 1948 earthquake in Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan) generously provided us. Upon crossing Cape Chaplino, we left behind the last piece of our native land and passed into the Bering Strait. I was thrilled, since this was the first time in my life that I had seen these places. But I recalled the words of Dobrovolsky when,

during a flight across the Verkhoyansky Range, he had said to me, "It's all beautiful, so long as the engines are working."

Suddenly my instrument panel came to life, but a large portion of it was not working. Soon, the radio-compass indicator began to receive signals from the Nome radio station. The flight continued in a lighter mood. I established communications with Nome and began to work international [Morse] code with them. To my question regarding the weather, they responded in feet, miles, and inches, which I immediately translated into the metric system and passed on to the aircraft commander.

In the Nome approach zone, I made contact with the command-dispatch point (*KDP*), using the call sign "Wild Cat." The dispatcher at the Nome *KDP* conversed with the crews in perfect Russian. We received landing instructions and began to land, one behind the other. We had just taxied off the strip when a Willys jeep appeared and, signaling us to follow it, led us to our parking area.

We exited the aircraft and were immediately surrounded by American military personnel—pilots, engineers, mechanics, and radio operators. A distinctive, lively conversation was begun. More was explained by gestures and, characteristically, we quickly began to understand each other. The general mood was uplifting. American photo-correspondents photographed our pilots, their aircraft, and in particular those places where patches covered bullet holes received at the front.

Mazuruk soon arrived in his B-25. An American colonel, the garrison commander, met him. After celebratory greetings and welcoming on the occasion of the arrival of Soviet pilots to Alaska, Mazuruk assembled the leadership and aircraft commanders of 1st *PAP* for issuing of instructions and orders for overnight accommodation of their personnel. Mazuruk assembled the "*Duglasisty*" crews separately near our aircraft and issued instructions: gather up our maps and rifles and take them with us. Our maps, however imprecise, obviously were classified information; I did not consider the type-1891/30 S.I. Mosin rifle to be classified, because they had been widely utilized on the fronts of the First World War. But we had to carry out the order.

Yet another surprise awaited us. When we had topped off our aircraft with fuel, covered the engines, removed our personal items, and begun to close the entrance door on the padlock, an American standing nearby—obviously a sentry on the parking area—loudly proclaimed, "No, no." He explained to us that access to the aircraft should be unhindered so, in the event of a fire or other unforeseen circumstances, servicing personnel could take measures to protect it. We quickly arrived at a compromise on the issue: the crew would retain the key to the lock and the lock, in the closed position, would remain with the sentry. Now, in order to gain unhindered access to the aircraft, it would be necessary to throw the key to the sentry from a distance; he would open the lock and, by that, confirm that we were the "owner" of the aircraft, and then return the key to us.

We noted that, during the technical servicing of the aircraft, the Americans had more refined processes; later they introduced them to us. For example, after completing a flight, the crew recorded notes concerning the functioning of the equipment on a standard form and left it in a plastic folder in a strictly designated place in the aircraft; then, not waiting for the servicing personnel to arrive, they departed.

The teams that serviced the aircraft had more assigned personnel in comparison to ours, and everyone had a narrow specialty. Some serviced the engines, others the airframe, a third the chassis, and so on. They worked quickly, with a high level of skill, taking personal responsibility for their tasks: a specialist who had corrected a defect placed his signature on the plastic-covered form next to the pilot's note and indicated what he had done to correct the deficiency. I was struck by the lack of running about in search of tools, spare parts, and other needed items. The technical staff had access to a three-wheeled motor scooter on the trailer of which were all the items necessary for work. In the event of an extreme necessity, one could quickly return to the supply room on this means of transport.

They settled us in Canadian huts of a hemispherical shape [Quonset huts]. The outside of the hut was covered with a galvanized, corrugated iron; the inside was insulated with fiberglass and sheathed in plastic. There were no windows, but doors on both ends of the building. The floor was made of

wood, painted bright ochre. Water-filled radiators stood along the wall. The source of warmth was a small oil heater. Above this heater was a fuel tank and valve with a temperature scale marked in Fahrenheit degrees. One set the desired temperature by rotating the knob. The steel cots were sturdy, with a mesh netting and soft, hair-stuffed mattresses. A khaki-color wool blanket, two sheets, and two modest oblong pillows made them warm, clean, and comfortable.

When we were assembled for the night, the Americans invited us to the dining facility, which was located near our quarters. In the dining facility were tables for eight persons each in two rows, without tablecloths but covered in white plastic. One portion of the hall was designated for officer personnel and the other portion for sergeants and soldiers. Two tables, each for four persons, stood in a recessed area left of the entrance. These tables were set aside for the garrison commander and high-ranking guests. There was no partition separating the tables of lower ranks from those of the officers. I involuntarily recalled our own dining facility, where it was required that a portion of the hall be partitioned off for senior officers; we, the pilots and technical staff, did not see and did not know what they were being fed. Here, everything was in plain view and everyone ate the same food.

We sat down at a table, interspersed with Americans. Soldiers served us. Lemon and orange juice with ice, tomato juice, and powdered milk stood on the table in glass pitchers. The Americans drank their juice before eating. We were not accustomed to this, but followed their example. The first course was oyster soup, which many of our pilots turned down. Just the same, I consumed the soup, though, honestly, I also did not like it. In the future, I came to eat it with pleasure. For the second course, they brought a large portion of chopped meat and, for garnish, fried potatoes, sweet peas, vegetables, salad, green onions, fresh fruit and tomatoes, celery, and some kind of tuber, the name of which I do not recall. The fruit included oranges and apples. I noted that the Americans required a menu of many fruits and vegetables. The dinner was lively and noisy, because our hosts were trying to make us welcome and comfortable.

Two colonels—the garrison commander and our own Mazuruk—ate at the command table. Afterward, Ilya Pavlovich Mazuruk told us that he did not eat so much as he was monitoring us, to

Lt. Col. Nedosekin proffers a long Russian cigarette Belomorkanal *to Lt. Krulicki of the ATC Wing upon the arrival of the Soviet military mission at Nome, Alaska, in the late summer/early fall of 1942. Courtesy of Ted Spencer.*

ensure that we ate enough. In fact, everyone stood behind their tables until the garrison commander sat down, inviting all the rest of us to take our seats. We had to remain seated at our table and got up only when the garrison commander was finished. His standing up signaled the end of dinner. As a mark of respect to a guest, this rule was extended to Mazuruk. Therefore, he delayed standing, in order that all his "lads" could eat their fill.

We departed the dining facility in small groups. My table partner, a lieutenant whose name I don't remember, offered me a "Camel" cigarette, and in exchange I gave him a "White Sea-Canal" cigarette.[15] I asked him where the store was located. Using gestures, he indicated that I should wait there, and disappeared. Five minutes later he appeared carrying in his hands a stack of *Life* magazines. I laughed and explained that I needed to buy cigarettes. Then we discussed that the Russian word *magazin* [store] was a homonym for the English word *magazine* [journal].

By evening, the Americans had begun to gather in our Canadian hut. Upon entry, each one visually sought out his friend with whom he had made acquaintance earlier. My "friend," the lieutenant, arrived with his own friend. They sat down on the cot, since there were not enough chairs. We began a pleasant conversation, using gestures, and exchanged souvenirs. Suddenly, the lieutenant discovered something hard under my mattress and became interested in what was lying there. I had to satisfy his curiosity. He enthusiastically began to explain something to me, and I understood—he wanted to buy my rifle. But I couldn't do that. Then he ran off and came back 10 minutes later with an American scoped rifle. He wanted to exchange rifles, as souvenirs. I had to refuse that, as well, even though his rifle was much more valuable than mine. In general, the Americans conducted themselves freely, and we, citizens of the Soviet Union, were constrained and boxed in regarding our behavior and desires by many instructions and regulations of conduct abroad, which they had crammed down our throat, and not just anywhere, but in the halls of the *TsK VKP(b)*.[16] There were so many times during three years of flights to the United States when we received private invitations to visit a home, villa, or ranch. But we were not able to take advantage of this hospitality, because we knew well what awaited us in the Soviet Union if we violated even one of the paragraphs of these instructions.

One of the Americans brought in a record player and a stack of records, among which were "*Polyushko-polye*" [Meadowland] and "*Valenki*" [Felt boots], recorded by Lidiya Ruslanova, and "*Zhili dva druga v nashem polku*" [Two friends lived in our regiment], sung by Leonid Utyosov. We began to disperse at midnight. The regime and discipline were strictly observed in garrison.

We got up at 0700 and did our morning ablutions. We walked into one of the side rooms. Along the right side from the entrance door were sinks with hot and cold running water. A mirror for shaving hung over each sink. On the opposite wall stood a structure that resembled a divan (sofa) with covers—this was a system of field lavatory pans. A communal lavatory?! It somewhat puzzled us, but no other conclusion was possible. We gave the impression that we were world-wise people. Just the same, we went out into the street in hopes of finding a toilet—in vain. There were no trees; just continuous vast tundra. I turned around and, with great embarrassment, acted just like the Americans—quietly fiddled with my glasses, smoked, and looked at *Life* magazines. My neighbor asked me to show him my TT [*Tula, Tokarev*, 7.62 x 25mm semi-auto] pistol. He suggested we exchange pistols. I explained that the pistol had a unique serial number, which was registered to my name in the aviation regiment headquarters. An exchange of pistols would be regarded as the loss of a weapon, and in wartime I would be subject to punishment.

After ablutions it was time for breakfast. This meal consisted of an assortment of fruit juices, two eggs fried with bacon, coffee with cream and sugar, and white bread with butter and cheese. After

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[15] Editor's note: *Belomorkanal papirosy*—a Russian cigarette with a cardboard mouthpiece.

[16] Editor's note: Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). In this same year, it was named the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

breakfast, a formation was held near the *KDP* at 0900. We filed into the crew pre-flight preparation room. The weather officer pressed a button and canvas curtains began to separate on the wall. A flight map at a scale of 1:1,000,000, that is, a 10-km scale map, was revealed, with our route from Fairbanks to Yakutsk inscribed on it. We glanced around. Can you believe it? We are flying with a 15-km scale map and they have a precise 10-km scale map, not only of their own territory but also of Eastern Siberia!

The weather officer reported the weather condition along the Nome–Fairbanks route. He reported on the weather on Chukotka and in Yakutia, where we had few weather stations, as a result of which he could not give a more detailed meteorological situation for those regions. Then the on-duty navigator issued each crew flight maps with route instructions. On them were indicated by typographic means the magnetic courses to follow, the distance between control points along the route, rough sketches of airfields, *VPP* types (unimproved or improved), landing azimuths, radio beacon zones, their call signs and working frequencies, altitude above sea level, and height of natural and man-made obstacles in the areas surrounding the airfields. The request to hand out maps to Yakutsk was denied. True, after some time we received our own maps, prepared in the USSR.

The group arrived in Fairbanks safely. Mazuruk, as so often happened with him, departed Nome after us and arrived in Fairbanks after our landing. Not having command-net radios on board, we had been advised while we were still in Nome that, upon landing in Fairbanks, we had to watch for signal fires from the *KDP*, which would be delivered by flare gun. If we saw a green color—landing was permitted; if the flare was red—go around again.

In addition to Americans, we were met by comrades from the Soviet Purchasing Commission [SPC], which was headed up by Colonel M.G. Machin. These included interpreters Elena Aleksandrovna Makarova and Natalya Fyodorovna Fenelonova, and engineers and technicians B.V. Kiselnikov, Aleksandr Vorotnyuk, Ye.G. Radominov, and others. Fairbanks was a modestly sized, comfortable,

Colonel Machin (left), representing the Soviet Purchasing Mission at Ladd Army Airfield, joins Colonel Hart, commanding officer at Ladd Army Airfield, in greeting Colonel Kiselev, Chief of the Soviet Mission's Technical and Inspection Services at Ladd Army Airfield. August 1942. [Courtesy of the Magadan Civil Aviation Division] Photo: C.E. Miller.

and clean town. For a town of this size, the commercial firm "North Company" stood out; there were also several grocery stores, a bar, and 3 or 4 restaurants. The majority of the town's inhabitants worked at the exceptionally large (for that time) air base [Ladd Army Airfield], where our own 1st Ferrying Aviation Regiment was stationed. Its commander was Lieutenant Colonel P.V. Nedosekin, who was replaced a short time later by Lieutenant Colonel N.S. Vasin.

The Americans designated four two-story wood buildings for Soviet military personnel. All occupied buildings on the garrison—dining facility, hospital, hangar, airfield, club, theater—were joined by subterranean passages through which it was possible to move to any building without outer clothing or an umbrella. The underground tunnels were also used for water pipes, sewer pipes, hot water, the heating system, electrical wires, and telegraph cables. Each branch off the tunnel was marked with signage—"Club," "Hospital," and so on. The club was located in the basement of one of our buildings; the Americans gave it up to the Russian pilots for their relaxation. The club was equipped with a large radio/tape player [*magnitola*] and snack bar. An American named Robert worked there.

Soon, on order from Mazuruk, Zhuravlyov's crew departed to Yakutsk to pick up a new group of pilots and deliver them to Fairbanks. We did not make it to Yakutsk, because the personnel of the 1st *PAP* were already in Seymchan. The crew of A. Budantsev, who was in charge of the larger group, was unable to continue the flight due to breakdown of equipment (the cover for the left wheel broke). We picked up his group and went to Fairbanks. It was autumn. The unstable cyclonic weather complicated the execution of flights. A large portion of the time on the route to Nome was spent in

Brig. Gen. Dale V. Gaffney, commander of the Alaskan Wing, Air Transport Command, with Col. Nikifor S. Vasin, commander of the 1st Ferrying Aviation Regiment. Courtesy of Ted Spencer.

Soviet and American personnel planning the first ferry of P-40 and A-20 aircraft from Fairbanks to Krasnoyarsk. From left to right: unidentified Soviet officer, unidentified American officer, Lieutenant Cole Baldwin, Captain Gurevich, unidentified American officer, interpreter Elena Makarova, Lieutenant Charles Cliff Howard, and Lieutenant Chelyshev. Ladd Army Airfield, Fairbanks, Alaska, 4 October 1942. Photo from personal collection of Terry S. Howard via Alexander B. Dolitsky.

clouds, with interrupted radio contact with the ground. The Nome weather forecasters had predicted average, and at times heavy, icing on the Nome–Fairbanks sector of the route. Because the anti-icing system of the Li-2 was relatively ineffective, Zhuravlyov decided to delay the flight until the weather improved. But the incoming commander of 1st *PAP*, Lieutenant Colonel N. Vasin, who was flying with us as a passenger, had other ideas. He decided to exercise his authority and forced us to fly to Fairbanks, accusing the crew of cowardice and inability to fly. Zhuravlyov refused to execute Vasin's order, claiming Vasin was simply a passenger to him. After some time, an instruction was received from Mazuruk to execute the flight under the personal responsibility of Comrade Vasin. Zhuravlyov had run into a brick wall.

We took off for Fairbanks. We entered overcast at an altitude of 200 meters. Icing began at an altitude of 800–850 meters. The outside air temperature was -4 to -5 degrees C [23–25 degrees F]. We continued to gain altitude, hoping to pass through the layers of overcast. This effort was unsuccessful. The ice crust grew extensively on the leading edge of the wing. The anti-icing system did not have the strength to break it off. Only the flight engineer, at intervals changing the propeller pitch, was able successfully to hurl the ice from the propellers. Pieces of ice struck the fuselage skin like cannon shots. We did not have communications; I could hear only a continuous crackling in my earphones. I began transmitting a continuous message that I was hearing no one and indicating the weather conditions. Our radio compass was not picking up any beacon. According to our instruments, our airspeed had fallen to 200 km/hr., then 190. Since a return to Nome was foreclosed by the weather conditions, and

to continue the flight in icing conditions threatened the loss of speed and then death, the commander made the decision to descend over unfamiliar terrain. I informed Fairbanks of our decision by radio. In the headphones, as before, was continuous crackling. A "window" appeared in the overcast at an altitude of 200-250 meters. Below, we could see a river and a forest. Zhuravlyov put the aircraft into a spiral. While we were turning, the "window" disappeared, but another one appeared. A river was visible and in the distance—its left tributary. It was a large river—the Yukon (there not being another such river in Alaska). By checking the map, we determined the tributary to be the Tanana River. This gave us some confidence, because the Tanana would lead us to Fairbanks. Snow was falling; visibility was 1,000-1,500 meters, dropping to 500-600 meters in squalls. In order not to collide with the river bank, I watched the left hemisphere and the co-pilot the right hemisphere. The flight engineer monitored the instruments and occasionally glanced ahead on course. The cockpit was quiet. Only short phrases like "left—mountain" and "right—forest" interrupted the silence. Zhuravlyov said that he saw the obstacles himself, but insurance was needed.

From left to right: Lieutenant Chelyshev, Lieutenant Cole Baldwin, interpreter Elena Makarova, Lieutenant Charles Cliff Howard, Captain Gurevich. Ladd Army Airfield, Fairbanks, Alaska, 4 October 1942. Photo from personal collection of Terry S. Howard via Alexander B. Dolitsky.

We encountered the railroad track that went from Seward through Anchorage to Fairbanks, and stuck close to it. I called Fairbanks. In the response signals I had a feeling that Fairbanks was nearby. I transmitted our flight conditions and arrival time. We reached the airfield ahead of the scheduled time and landed. Colonel Mazuruk, along with a group of pilots and Americans, met us. Zhuravlyov wanted to report to Mazuruk the completion of the sortie, but Mazuruk stopped him, saying that our safe arrival was itself the report. A group of American pilots and technicians surrounded us. We heard voices of congratulations and admiration for our flight. They said that American pilots would be awarded the Medal of Honor for such flights. The experienced pilots were more restrained; they knew how such flights frequently ended.

After the last flight, the flight engineer informed the aircraft commander of his concern regarding the unpreparedness of our Li-2 aircraft for operation in the fall-winter period. The oil reservoir needed to be heated and "Venetian blinds" needed to be installed.[17] The motors were already at the limit of their operating hours. The Americans were unable to assist us. Naturally, they advised us to scrap the Li-2 aircraft and get a new C-47.

During two days of rest granted by Mazuruk, I managed to become familiar with the C-47 aircraft. I studied the general features of its electrical, radio, and lighting equipment and made three circling flights with the crew of A. Dobrovolsky, which consisted of flight engineer V. Galyamov and on-board

[17] Editor's note: Slats that regulated engine temperature by controlling the amount of air blowing across the cylinders.

radio operator G. Mushtakov. The instructor pilot who was training Dobrovolsky's crew turned out to be an old friend of mine—American Air Force Captain Nikolay de Tolly, descendant of the famous Russian military leader, hero of the Patriotic War of 1812, Mikhail Bogdanovich Barklay de Tolly.[18]

I had made the acquaintance of Nikolay de Tolly earlier, on the first of our flights to Fairbanks. After welcoming speeches from one and then the other side, an American officer walked up to me and asked for permission to look inside our aircraft. He gave his name, but at the time I did not attach any significance to it, because I was shocked by his most pure, unaccented Russian speech. We went into the pilot's compartment. He inspected everything carefully, touching with his hands. I understood that he wasn't impressed with our aircraft. Later, he glanced into the forward baggage compartment and there on the floor found a moldy crust of black bread. He wiped this crust on his uniform and popped it into his mouth. I lost my composure in surprise, because it was embarrassing to me as well as to him. I asked him, "Why did you eat this dirty crust?" He responded, "Russia is my motherland, and I miss the taste of black Russian bread." Only then did it occur to me—his name, de Tolly. Then I understood that standing before me was a descendant of legendary commander Barklay de Tolly.

I asked him to come to the rear baggage compartment. There I untied a bag of rusks and suggested that he take as many as he wanted. He began to devour rusks with such an appetite that I thought his gums would start bleeding from intense chewing. I also began to devour rusks to keep him company. We stuffed ourselves like little children. We laughed. We were both satisfied.

Back to the Motherland: First Steps of the Ferrying Operation

After two days of rest, we flew from Fairbanks back to the Soviet Union in the first week of October. We refueled the aircraft in Nome and took a course to our home shores. We entered the overcast at an altitude of 100–150 meters. I made contact with Uelkal, obtained a weather report and bearing, and reported the time of flight. We increased altitude to 2,100 meters. Quietly, between tasks, we recalled our impressions of the meeting with the Americans.

Suddenly we sensed that the pilots' cabin at times was beginning to shudder. At first we thought that it was turbulence. But the cabin began to shudder more often and for longer periods of time. The commander declared that this was not turbulence and that the source of the vibration was somewhere in the aircraft. The flight engineer went out to the cargo compartment, inspected the wing surfaces, the motors, and the rear baggage compartment. Everything appeared to be normal. The vibration in the cabin grew stronger and now had begun to be felt in the controls. We changed the working regime of the engines. That did not help. We lowered the landing gear—same story. Zhuravlyov noted that the left wheel was rotating rapidly. The co-pilot reported that the right wheel was still. The commander pressed on the brakes—the vibration disappeared. We raised the landing gear. After a little while, the vibration started again with renewed force. The mechanic reported to the commander that the air brake was damaged, and the wheel had to be placed on constant brake. The vibration disappeared.

Our fate was put to the test again. Icing commenced at an altitude of 2,100 meters. The ice grew on the forward edge of the wings. The anti-icing system did not throw it off. Streams of water were flowing along the wing surface and then freezing, reducing the aerodynamic quality of the wing. We had the throttles pushed almost to their limiters; there was no reserve of power in the engines. We began slowly, but noticeably, to lose speed. There were two possible outcomes to the developing situation: either return to Nome or fight our way to visual flight over the sea. I did not participate in making this decision; I was the youngest member of the crew and this was my first winter navigation. I also had no fear. For some reason, I firmly believed in the experience of our pilots.

The pilots decided to descend toward the sea. The altimeter, adjusted for standard atmospheric pressure, that is, for sea level, was showing 1,100, then 600, then 200 meters. We were flying in clouds.

[18] Editor's note: The famous Russian commander Prince Barklay de Tolly (1761–1818) was a hero of the First Patriotic War and anti-Napoleon campaigns in Europe (1812–15). He was a full chevalier of the Order of Saint George, the highest military award of the Russian Empire.

150 meters . . . 100 meters . . . water! We breathed easier. At times, we flew into broken clumps of overcast. The commander descended to 70-60 meters. All around was water, and only on the horizon did the sea and the overcast blend together. A light snow was falling. The visibility was on the order of 1,000-2,000 meters. Below, the sea was dark green in color with breaking waves. I established communications with Uelkal. I took a weather forecast and asked for a bearing, pressing on the telegraph key several times. The bearing operator transmitted that my signal was floating, and he could not give me a bearing. I looked attentively forward. Finally, there appeared the long awaited coastline! The bare, dark, and impregnable cliffs seemed to us sweeter than any sea. The commander turned to the left and we flew along the coast. We made an attempt to become orientated, but we were unsuccessful in comparing the map with the terrain at low altitude and in limited light conditions. We determined that we should land at Uelkal instead of Markovo, because Markovo was not prepared to conduct night aircraft landings.

We continued on, staying within sight of the coastline. We passed Cape Chaplino, but did not see any settlement. The coastline turned sharply to the right, then left. When we began our turn, we saw that we were surrounded by mountains in an inlet trap. The commander made a 50-70-degree banking turn; we were mindful of the threat of colliding with the protruding cliffs. Later, we learned that this inlet trap was Provideniya Bay. During our exit to the open sea, I made contact with Uelkal. I reported our decision to land there and requested their support for layover and takeoff in the morning. I took a weather report and a bearing. We imposed the bearing on our map. It turned out that Uelkal lay directly across Anadyr Bay at a distance of 300-305 km. I took another weather report for Uelkal—ceiling: 200 meters; visibility: 2 km, light snow. We decided to leave the coast and fly direct—and we landed safely. We spent the night in the *yaranga* of I.M. Lunyov. All night we listened to the noise of the technicians working on the landing strip. In the morning we took off for Markovo and from there flew onward to Seymchan.

On the following day, at 1100, we took off for Yakutsk. We flew at an altitude of 3,300 meters in overcast. The flight proceeded quietly, with reliable communications. In my free time away from the radio, I listened to the latest *Sovinformburo* [Soviet Information Agency] news. The situation unfolding in Stalingrad greatly concerned us former "front liners," who not long ago had been executing combat missions there. Having heard the information, we began to discuss the time frame of the offensive of the Red Army. Then, suddenly, both engines cut out. The commander pushed the control column forward. "Hey, we're done for!" We began to descend into the overcast and mountains. For some reason, I had no feelings of fear; I was confident we would come out of this developing situation safely. It was obvious that the absence of experience gave me faith. It was possible that I was already becoming accustomed to flights in extreme conditions. German anti-aircraft guns fired at us at the front; no one was shooting at us on the ferry route, but the flights were conducted in extreme conditions, due to unreliable weather and the worn-out state of our aircraft.

The flight engineer undertook energetic measures to reestablish the function of our engines. I broadcast an urgent radio call with our call sign, a brief report of our failing engines, the flight conditions, and our believed location. A minute or two passed, which seemed like an eternity. The vertical speed of our altitude loss was 12-15 m/sec. The left engine began working normally. The mechanic spent several minutes working with the second engine, and it, too, resumed normal operation.

We emerged from the overcast, banking sharply to the left; the ground seemed a stone's throw away. Around us were mountains and forests. Some kind of small stream flowed beneath us. We flew along a small, narrow valley between the mountain ranges in the hope that the mountains would divide somewhere and we could establish a circle and gain altitude. After some time, we came out at the intersection of two small valleys; the mountains divided into the distance, but their peaks were covered in clouds. We began to circle and gain altitude. At 1,200 meters, we re-entered the overcast. Our crew cabin was quiet. Everyone was looking at the altimeter needle, which for some reason was moving very slowly. We finally reached a safe 2,600 meters and were able to take a course for Yakutsk. I obtained the weather report and a bearing. Yakutsk asked for the reason of our engine failure. I

transmitted the mechanic's words that we would report the cause upon landing.

To this day, I do not know why our engines failed. Perhaps the flight engineer, not having turned on the carburetor heaters in a timely manner, had exposed them to the cold; perhaps there was some other kind of failure on his part that they concealed from me. I did not ask too many questions. I understood only that our aircraft was old, that it had been dragged already pretty tattered to the front, that its engine resources [hours] were almost exhausted, and that it was awaiting urgent repair. We were anticipating receipt of a new C-47. In Yakutsk, Zhuravlyov made an attempt to abandon our Li-2 and obtain a C-47. Pushchinsky remained unbending, declaring that we would receive a new aircraft only after delivering our Li-2 to the factory.[19]

We took off from Yakutsk on 26 October 1942, planning an intermediate landing at Kirensk, a distance of 1,352 km. Our crew included a flight engineer named Volodin, the senior engineer of communications and radio navigation of our air route, N. Ovsienko, and the chief weather officer of the Main Directorate of Northern Sea Route (*GUSMP*).[20] We executed a normal flight, flying above the clouds at 2,100 meters in a clear sky. The flight of our aircraft was controlled only by course and route speed computed on the ground [dead reckoning]. It was impossible to determine the location of our aircraft in view of the absence of on-board radio beaconing devices and broadcasting radio equipment. After six hours of flight, the commander began to display some concern. According to the audibility of the radio signals from the Kirensk beacon, I felt that the airfield was still far away, on the order of 300-400 km. The sun took cover behind the horizon and darkness fell. We had flown for 7-7 ½ hours already. The flight engineer warned that we had 20-25 minutes of fuel remaining. The commander requested another beaconing. We were moving precisely on our route. The flight engineer announced, "Fuel for 10 minutes."

We penetrated through the overcast over unfamiliar terrain. A landing was unavoidable, but what its consequences would be, we did not know. We emerged from the overcast. It was dark all around us; only the outline of the Lena River glistened. The commander turned on our lights in order to avoid obstacles upon landing, and then our engines cut out—they had run out of fuel. The commander set the aircraft down on some kind of tiny field, sprouting with small bushes. Parallel to our landing course, on the right, we saw the bed of a small stream. The commander mechanically increased throttle and pulled the column toward himself. The engines had already quit working, but the speed of the aircraft was still sufficient to permit us to cross the streambed. In front, inexorably rushing toward us, was the bank of the Lena River. The commander and co-pilot stomped on the brakes. The aircraft began to shake and, after several seconds, settled on its tail. We had stopped only two or three meters from the steep bank of the Lena River, which was covered by thin ice; a large opening in the ice was forming near the aircraft. My skin went cold at the thought that we could have ended up there.

Probationer Volodya was the first to jump down from the aircraft. Suddenly, he shouted, "The aircraft is on fire!" The cause of the probationer's panic was quickly revealed. Snow that had fallen on the glowing exhaust pipes had instantly boiled off, creating a steam cloud, which he took to be a fire. When our eyes became somewhat accustomed to the darkness, we saw a plowed field, a small grove of trees, and the remnants of stacked firewood—somewhere nearby was a human dwelling. Then suddenly there was not a single light; the night completely swallowed everything. We decided to fire several flares into the air in order to attract attention. We lit a fire, and, after 15-20 minutes, we heard the squeal of sled runners and the snorting of a horse. As it later became clear, the chairman of a *kolkhoz* [a collective farm] and one of his workers, a boy of 13 or 14 years, were rushing toward us. They had seen our aircraft, and our flares helped them quickly to reach us. We learned that the village

[19] Editor's note: V.A. Pushchinsky, at that time commander of the 8th Transport Aviation Regiment.

[20] Editor's note: *GUSMP—Glavnoye Upravleniye Severnogo Morskogo Puti.* The Northern Sea Route was used by transport vessels to traverse the length of the Soviet Union, from far eastern ports to Arkangelsk and Murmansk, when ice conditions permitted.

of Petropavlovka was nearby. Looking at the map, we determined that it was an additional 105 km to Kirensk. After this, I sent out an SOS to all radio stations from our aircraft radio, reporting our location and the fact that we needed assistance. We covered the engines and went together with the chairman to the village. Along the way, he told us that he was the only man in the village. All the others had been mobilized for the front. Thirteen families had already received death notices.

We were put up in the chairman's house. Only a fat-burning oil lamp lit the room. The lamp was burned only in celebratory circumstances due to a shortage, more likely a complete absence, of gasoline. We poured gas into the lamp, added a handful of salt to reduce the explosive danger of the fuel, and ignited the "genuine" light. The woman of the house was busy preparing supper. We, for our part, gave her sugar, *tushonka*, and chocolate from our "untouchable supply."[21] We slept side by side on the floor for the night.

We were already up at dawn and, having quickly eaten, departed to our aircraft. We left our co-pilot in the village in order that he contact Kirensk by telephone and find out when help would arrive. We looked around at the terrain in daylight and selected a take-off strip about 700 meters from our aircraft. It was on a field that had been seeded with winter wheat and was already covered in snow. We decided to make a landing "T" from fir-tree branches for the receipt of an aircraft, but had not finished the task when a type P-5 aircraft appeared overhead. The commander showed by gestures how to make an approach and execute a landing. The P-5 pilot rocked his wings in acknowledgment. Just the same, he did not land directly, but made a deliberate approach and only then landed his aircraft. The pilot brought us provisions: a sack of bread, American bacon, *tushonka*, sugar, cigarettes, and matches. He also gave us 50 liters of gasoline, promising to make a second sortie that same day.

We waited for him the entire day, in vain. Snow began to fall with blizzard winds. Our rescuer appeared only on the fifth day. He explained that he had not been able to execute the sortie on the first day because of a leak in his oil radiator. He delivered us 300 liters of gasoline and warned us not to delay—the forecasters were predicting cyclone-like conditions with snow fall in the second half of the day. We refueled. The propellers of the cold-soaked engines rotated stiffly. We did not have ignition—the batteries had lost some of their charge. We gave the "hand of friendship" to rotate the starter. The first attempts at startup were unsuccessful, but, in the end, the engines fired off. After warming the engines for a while, the flight engineer increased revolutions and the generator kicked in.

We were firmly stuck in Kirensk—the snowstorm lasted several days. On 9 November, we received instruction from *GU GVF* to fly from Irkutsk to Novosibirsk and deliver the aircraft to an aviation repair base. This instruction greatly surprised me, because a flight on the Irkutsk–Krasnoyarsk sector should pass through Tayshet. This city was my birthplace, where I studied in school and from which I departed to the front. Tayshet was well known for its countless prison camps; it was the place from which the construction of the Baykal-Amur Mainline—the "construction project of the 20th century"—was begun.[22]

I talked Zhuravlyov into descending over Tayshet so that I could throw out some gifts that I had purchased for my parents in Nome and Fairbanks. We flew at an altitude of 900 meters visually. We passed Cheremkhovo, Zimu, Tulun, and Nizneudinsk—all Siberian towns familiar to me from my childhood. My spirit was both uplifted and apprehensive. Would I ever visit these places again? My growing feeling did not deceive me—I was never again in these regions that were dear to my heart.

Thirty kilometers remained to Tayshet. I explained to the commander that the primary control orientation point would be the smokestack of the railroad tie soaking plant. My house stood on the

[21] Editor's note: *Neprikosnovennyy zapas* (untouchable supply) is a universally applied Russian term that can be attached to foodstuffs, ammunition, cans of fuel, or any logistic commodity, a reserve supply of which is kept at hand for use only in extreme situations.

[22] Editor's note: The Baykal–Amur Mainline (BAM) is a largely single-track rail line that runs roughly parallel to the Trans-Siberian Railway, several hundred kilometers north. Begun during the Stalin era using prisoner labor, it was completed only in 1991. *See* Finn-Olaf Jones, "The Other Siberian Railroad," *New York Times*, August 12, 2012.

third street from the smokestack. The commander, half-joking and half serious, said that I should not twist his head with smokestacks. I sat in the right seat and guided the aircraft to my house. I eagerly took the control yoke in my own hands. The plant smokestack appeared on the horizon when we were at 300 meters altitude. I turned to the right in order to come out precisely on my street. The commander cautioned me that when flying over the house, I should be descending a bit. At this moment I experienced a boastful desire that everyone in Tayshet see me, and that I was piloting the aircraft. I was thinking, for a young boy, only 18 years old, such a desire could be forgiven, the more so that I was guiding not a toy aircraft, but a genuine one. We threw out the parcel, rocked our wings to those running out of my house, and took a course for Krasnoyarsk.

Our flight from Krasnoyarsk to Novosibirsk was planned for 1000 on 11 November 1942. But the chief of the airport, Colonel Pelepkenko, wakened the crew at 0600 and required that we free up the adjacent parking spot where our aircraft was parked. It turned out that Krasnoyarsk was awaiting the first group of American P-40 aircraft from Kirensk. We knew that I.P. Mazuruk would be leading the first group of airplanes from Fairbanks. He actually departed from Fairbanks on 6 October and led his group to Yakutsk only on 28 October. The deputy chief of the air route, Lieutenant Colonel V.V. Fokin, led this group the remainder of the distance to Krasnoyarsk. Although we were not ferry-crew members for fighter aircraft, we were pleased to hear of these activities. The front would begin to receive material assistance, thanks to our effort on the air route.[23]

The Air Route Operates on Behalf of the Warfronts

After greeting the New Year (1943), the crew of P.F. Zhuravlyov took off for Fairbanks to take possession of an American C-47 transport aircraft. At that time, this was a first class machine with two reliable Pratt & Whitney engines, 650 engine hours, an effective anti-icing system, modern radio-navigation and communications equipment, and a heater in the pilot's cabin.

A blizzard in Uelkal delayed our flight to Fairbanks by two weeks. During this time, the building and service structures were covered with snow up to their roofs. The aircraft in their parking areas were completely covered under a layer of snow. Work involving all available personnel was begun. The snow was so dense that we had to cut it with a saw. Tunnels were cut from the living quarters to the service buildings, dining facility, and toilet. We were sleeping in two-tiered wooden-plank beds. They had not managed to construct a roof over the barracks in the autumn, so we had to put up an interior ceiling made of reindeer hides. We did not have sufficient sheets and blankets. Of the communal services, we had only an outdoor toilet; the bathing facility was still under construction. Thus, everyone observed personal hygiene as they were able. The building was heated by a stove made from a barrel.

Naturally, upon arrival in Fairbanks, we went into the city and purchased everything that was necessary for personal hygiene and toilet. After supper, we went to the club that had been set up in the semi-basement of our hut. After two weeks of "slum living" in Uelkal, with all of its inconveniences, we encountered a sharp contrast: the sensation of a clean body, fresh underwear, and full stomachs—in addition to a mug of beer with a good cigarette and Russian songs performed by Leonid Utyosov and Lidiya Ruslanova. All this gave rise to a sense of courage and confidence in our efforts and success in victory over fascism. Soon the *Duglasisty* crews came in. We began to exchange the experiences of working on the new C-47 aircraft. In the morning, we undertook a study of the material components and training flights under the guidance of instructor pilot Nikolay de Tolly.

Our Li-2 aircraft, a model of the American DC-3 aircraft, the license for production of which

[23] Editor's note: The first flight of Lend-Lease aircraft bound for the Soviet Union took off from Great Falls, Montana, on August 31, 1942. By the end of September, American ferry pilots had delivered to Fairbanks 30 Curtiss P-40 fighters and 15 more Douglas A-20 bombers. On October 6, the first flight departed Alaska for the Soviet Union, with Lt. Col. Pavel Nedosekin leading the group of 12 A-20s. Blake W. Smith, "The Northwest Route to Alaska," in Dolitsky, *Allies in Wartime*, 2007, pp. 25–26.

Aviation equipment engineers G.T Smirnov (far right) and L.G. Shatikhin giving instructions to aviation technicians. Fairbanks, 1943–44. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

the USSR had purchased from the USA in 1935, differed little in technique of piloting from the C-47. Therefore, the instructor gave emphasis to the study of the instrument panel and equipment of the aircraft. The location of instruments was the same as in the Li-2 aircraft. The primary difference was that we would now have to quickly learn to transpose units of measure into the metric system; that is, pounds into grams and kilograms, inches into centimeters, feet into meters, and miles into kilometers. After brief theoretical preparation and instruction, the instructor pilot started the engines and suggested that Zhuravlyov execute the takeoff. Then we each made three independent flights.

Nikolay de Tolly waited for us at the airfield. Zhuravlyov, having saluted, reported the completion of the mission and asked if there were any observations. This evoked a smile from de Tolly. Slapping Zhuravlyov on the shoulder, he formed the letter "O" with his thumb and index finger: "Okay! The crew can receive the aircraft and fly independently."

Intensive, monotonous work was begun. The flow of C-47 aircraft increased. More crews were required. Study was conducted during the course of sorties. A crew of probationers was assigned to fly with a trained crew. During the spring flying period of 1943, we trained the six crews of aircraft commanders I. Vasilyev, A. Kotov, A. Matrasenkov, A. Romanov, A. Evstafyev, and N. Anuryev.

In the beginning period of this effort, Colonel Mazuruk was the chief of the Krasnoyarsk Air Route and supervised the flight and ground services. In connection with the growth of the volume of work for ferrying aircraft, the *NKO VTK* instituted reforms. The Directorate of the Krasnoyarsk-Uelkal Air Route (*UVTKU*) was created and Major General I.S. Semyonov, former chief of the political directorate of *GU GVF*, was named its chief. The flight and transport regiments were combined into the 1st Ferrying Aviation Division, commanded by I.P. Mazuruk.

In July 1943, General Semyonov decided to familiarize himself with the housekeeping arrangements at the various airfield locations. Over the course of a week, he visited Khandyga (Tyoplyy Klyuch), Oymyakon, Seymchan, Markovo, and Uelkal. A question arose concerning a flight to Anadyr, where construction was underway on a ground forces airfield that was being planned as a reserve airfield on the ferry route. We knew that, two weeks before, Shashin's crew had landed there with I.P. Mazuruk. The Anadyr airfield was short, on the order of 400–450 meters, and Shashin took off from there with great difficulty. General Semyonov asked Zhuravlyov if he could land at Anadyr on such a *VPP*. Zhuravlyov replied he could land, but as for taking off... Just the same, professional pride took the upper hand. If Shashin had landed and taken off, why couldn't we? We decided to try it. Upon our arrival at Anadyr, we made a circuit over the airfield. We examined the approaches and the *VPP*. Then we made a low-level pass. We set down at minimum speed. The commander used the brakes carefully, because the soil was poorly compacted. The zone for full stop was insufficient; beyond was a steep slope down to the sea. The commander turned the aircraft 180 degrees. From the abrupt braking of the right wheel and throttle on the engines, the aircraft was on the verge of tipping over. We heard the sounds of gravel striking the propeller blades and fuselage. The aircraft bounced onto the landing strip. We steered toward a hillock on which the laborers were resting and had placed their tools. We cut off the engines and examined the propeller blades. Only the paint had been stripped off the blades by the gravel; there were no deformations.

A meeting was arranged with the local leadership, who arrived from the village on a tracked tractor. At that time there was no other transport. From the airfield, which was being constructed on a hillside, a steep slope dropped into a swampy valley. Only tracked vehicles made this path to the village traversable.

After dinner and familiarization with the processes for construction of the airfield, we began preparations for takeoff. We examined the strip. We decided to lighten the takeoff weight of the aircraft. General Semyonov ordered us to unload cargo. We drained off 400–450 liters of gasoline from the rear tanks. Takeoffs occurred only in one direction—toward the sea—since the wind direction was landward. We taxied to the very end of the runway. The commander held the aircraft on the brakes and smoothly applied the throttles. The fuselage began to shake in chorus with the growing power of the engines. The commander released the brakes and we began our takeoff run. Our on-board mechanic moved the throttles to full military power. The cabin was quiet; we heard only the powerful revolutions of the engines. The end of the *VPP* was quickly approaching, and the arrow on the speed indicator showed only 65 miles per hour, that is 104 kmh. The commander pulled back on the yoke. The aircraft initially lifted off, then flew downward, parallel to the slope, toward the sea. The flight engineer quickly raised the landing gear. Our speed grew slowly and the water approached quickly. First 20, then 15 meters to the water. Upon command, the flight engineer extended 15 degrees of flaps. The additional lift that was created and the air cushion that was formed between the aircraft and the outstretched surface permitted us to avoid collision with the water. Our speed was now 90 mph. The aircraft had transitioned into horizontal flight and, as our speed increased, it began to gain altitude. At an altitude of approximately 200 feet (approximately 70 meters), we withdrew the flaps and set a course for Markovo. General Semyonov was present in the cockpit during the takeoff and observed the crew's entire work process. It appeared that he firmly understood what he had witnessed.

Upon arrival in Markovo, the general congratulated the crew for safe execution of the flight and declared a rest and overnight stay. We did not see him until the next morning, but the general made his presence known one more time when we went to supper in the cafeteria. The chief of the airfield, Gayshin, handed the crew a bottle of champagne in the general's name.

Anadyr was used as a reserve airfield for the most part in the winter, when frequent blizzards with heavy snowfall caused difficulty in the ferrying of aircraft. A *VPP* was constructed on the ice alongside the Directorate of Polar Aviation (*UPA*) hydroplane landing area in Anadyr Inlet. On the

shore, the hydroplane airport had service and living accommodations, a radio station, weather station, dining facility, and bath. The ground forces airfield on the hill was made ready for service in 1945, after the end of the war. There was not a single building there until 1946.

I have already mentioned that the Americans increased the deliveries of aircraft to the USSR in the summer period of 1943. The load on the flight crews also grew sharply. On some days, they ferried in two fighters or two bombers, having flown a total of 10–11 hours. A still greater load was placed on the transport crews, who took off ahead of the groups for the purpose of weather reconnaissance and rushing cargo for the front; we delivered ferry crews to their bases on the return flights. Considering the relatively modest speed of the C-47 aircraft, our crew's sorties lasted up to 23–24 hours without rest. The co-pilot and flight engineer flew the aircraft during the day, and the aircraft commander and radio operator at night.

In the fall–winter period, the ferrying of aircraft was encumbered by developing climatic and meteorological conditions. Freezing temperatures down to 40 to 60 degrees below zero were not a rarity. Hydraulic hoses for raising and lowering the landing gear and the braking system froze up and frequently broke. Lacking sufficient American heaters for warming the engines, we utilized makeshift means.[24] Maintenance support operations were conducted in the open air, often with winds blowing. The engineer and technical staff all suffered frostbite on their hands and faces. When the maintenance preparation of the aircraft was completed, the second, but most important, step lay ahead—relay ferrying of the aircraft to the west—to the front!

The ferry pilots sat in their aircraft at the leading edge of the strip. Take off! Once in the air, they reformed into a wedge. The formation flight required special habits. One had to observe a strictly determined interval between aircraft. This was especially important when flying in overcast. If one fell behind, lost the wing of the lead aircraft, or flew in front of a trailing aircraft, bad things happened. If one got ahead just a little bit, the propeller could damage one's partner flying in front. This had already occurred, one time, during a flight of two A-20 attack bombers over Alaska in overcast, on 14 March 1943.

A formation flight lasted more than five hours in an unheated cockpit. The pilot's windscreen frosted up on the inside from his own breath, and the pilot frequently had to back off in order to see the aircraft in front of him. During a flight such as this, the pilot became so cold in his own tight cockpit that he could not move his mouth to utter a word or smoke a cigarette. A technician or mechanic had to come to his aid. Due to the short period of daylight in the winter, ferry pilots flew only in the day; at night, transport aircraft delivered the ferry pilots to their base.

At the beginning of October 1943, Zhuravlyov's crew was summoned to the regiment commander, Pushchinsky, who explained that our on-board radio operator, Glazkov, was being transferred to Benkunsky's crew. From our perspective, this was irritating news; after a year of working together, we had formed a strong bond of friendship. But our arguments were unconvincing; according to Pushchinsky, the transfer had been decided at the division headquarters.

In the morning, we flew to Moscow along with Benkunsky and Mazuruk, and there received three days of rest. When we returned, Mazuruk informed us that we would be carrying to Magadan awards to the chief of *Dalstroy*, Nikishov, and the chief geologist, Tsaregradsky. In Magadan, the perpetrators of the celebration themselves greeted us: Nikishov, Tsaregradsky, their families, and other leaders of *Dalstroy*.[25] At that time it surprised me that Nikishov, his wife, and daughter arrived at the meeting in different vehicles. Someone who was present said that each member of the family had his or her own

[24] Editor's note: One method involved burning gasoline in a barrel, or branches in a bonfire, under the engine. The technique sometimes resulted in scorched spark plug wires, which would subsequently crack during use, disabling the affected cylinders. Vladimir Ratkin, "The North American B-25 Mitchell," *Mir Aviatsii* [Aviation World], No. 2 (8), 1994.

[25] Editor's note: *Dalstroy*, also known as Far North Construction Trust, was an organization set up in 1931 by the Soviet *NKVD* (the predecessor of the *KGB*) to manage road construction and the mining of gold in the Chukotka region of the Russian Far East, now known as Kolyma, using forced (slave) labor.

personal vehicle and chauffer. I took this for a joke. But now? It's clear there was a reason Nikishov was referred to as the "God of Kolyma."

The celebratory gathering took place at the Gorky House of Culture and Recreation. Colonel Mazuruk handed Nikishov and Tsaregradsky certificates awarding them the rank Hero of Socialist Labor [the hammer and sickle gold medals] and the Order of Lenin. Then a concert was held, moreover, at a high professional level; former artists from among the prisoner population participated in it.

The Legendary Icebreaker *Krasin* in Wartime

Ferry crews used the Magadan airfield at the 13-kilometer marker. In the winter period, an additional airfield was established on the ice in Nagayevo Inlet. Magadan had long been the sea gate for Kolyma. Sea transport provided logistical support for the entire region of Kolyma: foodstuffs, industrial goods, equipment, and various types of machinery for miners, prospectors, and laborers.[26]

The northern portion of the Sea of Okhotsk was covered in ice during the winter period. The legendary icebreaker *Krasin* was stationed there to lead ship convoys in wartime. The commander of this icebreaker was Captain Second Rank Markov. At the end of January 1944, the captain of the *Krasin* needed ice reconnaissance data to escort a convoy through the ice field. This mission was assigned to Benkunsky's crew. Our aircraft commander was an experienced naval aviator who had worked 18 years in Arctic waters and, on more than one occasion, had flown ice reconnaissance in aircraft with open cockpits. He provided us several moments of gaiety. Some 15–20 minutes after takeoff, the cockpit was quite warm. The captain sat opposite me behind the navigator's table. I saw the captain remove his winter hat and gloves. After a little while, he unbuttoned his long fur jacket. A pair of protective glasses and a facemask fell from the jacket to the floor of the cabin. I saw embarrassment on the captain's face. Picking up his things from the floor, he said that this was the first time in his life that he had flown on such a good aircraft.

According to the captain's data, ice reconnaissance would take 2–3 hours of flight. We decided to gain altitude to 3,000 meters in order to have an enlarged field of view over the great expanse of water. We penetrated through a modest layer of scattered cumulus clouds. The sky above us was clear. It was hoped that the overcast was ending and we would transition to visual flight. Our hopes were not realized. Control of the flight was conducted by beaconing from the Seymchan and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatka broadband radio station *ShVRS* equipment.[27] As the scheduled time of flight was being exhausted, we decided to penetrate below into visual flight. We controlled our altitude by a radio altimeter. We came out of the clouds at 180–200 meters. After 25 minutes, we spotted a dark-colored horizontal belt on the horizon. This turned out to be the surface of the open sea. We determined our precise location by beacons. Having completed the reconnaissance, we gained altitude and flew to Magadan. Captain Markov was satisfied with the work we had accomplished and invited us to be his guests aboard the *Krasin*. We accepted his invitation with great pleasure.

The captain led us to his cabin, which consisted of a modest room with an adjacent bedroom. In the room stood an oval table, securely attached to the floor. Around the table were six rotating chairs, also attached to the floor. Against the wall was a soft sofa, and on the opposite wall were two portholes. An iron cot stood in the bedroom. Nearby was the funnel-shaped mouthpiece of a voice communication system. On the writing desk sat a model of the *Krasin*, a photograph of the captain's

[26] Editor's note: Magadan is a port town and the administrative center of the Magadan *Oblast* [district], located on the Sea of Okhotsk in Nagayevo Bay and serving as a gateway to the Kolyma region. Magadan was founded in 1930 in the Magadan River Valley near the settlement of Nagayevo. During the Stalin era, Magadan was a major transit center for prisoners sent to *gulags* (labor camps) in the Far East. From 1932 to 1953, it was the administrative center of the *Dalstroy* organization.

[27] Editor's note: *Shirokoveshchatelnaya radiostantsiya* (broadband radio station). Every aircraft that had on board a radio-polycompass (*RPK*) or radio compass (*RK*) that was within range of a *ShVRS* could use its emanations for determining the aircraft's dead reckoning position for resolution of other radio-navigational tasks.

wife with their children, maps and books. The table in the captain's cabin was bountifully covered with all sorts of delicacies. The time passed unnoticed and gaily. The captain recalled the history of the *Krasin* from the day of its construction and recited its propulsion capabilities in both ice and the open sea.

U.S. Vice President Henry Wallace Visits Chukotka via the ALSIB Air Route

In early May 1944, Captain G.S. Benkunsky flew as a member of the crew of P.P. Matveev to Washington for familiarization with a route that was new to him. On 10 May, a team arrived to prepare two aircraft for flights with Vice President Henry Wallace of the USA. A pilot of the 8th *TAP*, Pyotr Aleksandrovich Maslyakov, headed up our crew, which also included the commander of the 1st Ferrying Aviation Division, Colonel Mazuruk.

We waited for the vice president in Seymchan, where he arrived on 23 May 1944, on a C-54 aircraft.[28] Meetings were begun in the morning. Henry Wallace, his personal security detail, a doctor, advisers, and secretaries were accommodated in the salon of our aircraft. An American colonel, the captain of the C-54 aircraft, a good-hearted fellow with a sense of humor, sat at the navigator's table in the pilot's compartment as our guest. He was very disappointed that his C-54 was not flown to Magadan because of the technical unsuitability of the airfield for this type of aircraft.

At that point in time, Magadan had two ground forces airfields: the primary field at the 13-kilometer marker and a reserve field at the 47-kilometer marker that was used exceptionally rarely.

Vice President Henry Wallace with Colonel N.S. Vasin and Colonel Russel Keillor, Ladd Army Airfield commander, at dinner during Wallace's stopover at Fairbanks during his 1944 mission to the Soviet Union and China via the ALSIB Air Route. Courtesy of Ted Spencer.

[28] Editor's note: Vice President Henry Wallace departed Washington, D.C., on May 20, 1944, to begin a special mission to Siberia, China, and Soviet Central Asia. Hays, *Alaska–Siberia Connection*, p. 107; Associated Press release, Washington D.C., May 20, 1944.

We flew to Magadan intending to land at the 13-km airfield. But, on the air approach, we received an order to land at the 47-km strip. This instruction came to us through channels of interested organs. Magadan was a closed city. The approach route for landing at the 13-km airfield passed over the entire city. Obviously, there was concern that the Americans would photograph classified installations.

In Magadan, the leadership of *Dalstroy*, headed by Nikishov, greeted our high-level guests. Eventually, Henry Wallace visited the ship and truck repair shops, the "Dukcha" *sovkhoz* [state collective farm], a store, and a kindergarten.[29] During Wallace's visit to the kindergarten, he was not satisfied with the outward appearance of the children. He shook hands with almost every other child, clearly checking their nutritional state. He did the very same thing with children in the city Komsomolsk-on-Amur, where we visited later. In the evening, Wallace was invited to the Gorky House of Culture, where a concert was given in his honor.

On the following day, we departed to Berelyokh (Susuman settlement), where gold mines were located. During our approach, the chief of the airport requested that we make an additional large circuit in order to give him time to get his things in order. We made a large circle. Then Mazuruk declared to Maslyakov that he would land the aircraft himself. Maslyakov warned that the soil on the landing strip was not level, and attempted to take control of the aircraft himself. Mazuruk did not change his decision and landed the aircraft. How about that?!

Burrowing into the soil by its wheels, the aircraft bounded, struck the ground with its wheels again, bounced, and so on three or four times. The American colonel touched me on the shoulder: "Victor!" Then he placed his hands on his chest and closed his eyes. By gestures, and some words, he explained that if he had to experience another such landing, he would die! Maslyakov's face turned red. "Ilya Pavlovich! I warned you!" I did not hear the subsequent conversation, because I had left the pilot's compartment in order to open the door and deploy the steps.

Our overblown hospitality was spoiled by two additional minor moments of discomfort. When we were making our second circuit over the airfield, we saw a group of people who were poking leafy branches into the ground along the edges of the road. It so happened that the Americans also saw this. Passing along an avenue sprinkled with yellow sand, one of them pulled a branch from the ground and showed it to his fellow countrymen, excitedly commenting that perhaps all this was a "Potemkin village."[30] Henry Wallace quietly passed by and gave the appearance that he had not noticed anything; in doing so, he let it be understood that some members of his delegation were impolite.

The Americans refused an invitation to go to a cafeteria for lunch. It appeared that they wanted more quickly to go to the gold mine. They walked to the cars and again there was confusion. The American pilot recognized the driver and vehicle that carried him about the town the previous day. He exclaimed with surprise and, shaking the driver's hand in greeting, said, "Magadan–Ivan, Berelyokh–Ivan!" Our Ivan began to deny that it was he. The colonel, pointing at the numerical marking of the vehicle and his uniform, continued to assert that he was not mistaken. This happened.

Our people were waiting for the American delegation in Susuman. The leadership was well dressed in special working clothes. However, our guests were not so interested in life in the village or the technological process of washing sand. Their full attention was riveted on the end result of the

[29] Editor's note: Henry Wallace earned a bachelor's degree from Iowa State University in 1910 in animal husbandry. He was named Secretary of Agriculture in Roosevelt's cabinet in 1933 and served in that position until September 1940, when Roosevelt selected him as his running mate. He served as U.S. Vice President until 1944, when Roosevelt selected Harry S. Truman to replace Wallace on the Democratic Party slate.

[30] Editor's note: The phrase "Potemkin village" (derived from the Russian *Potyomkinskaya derevnya*) was originally used to describe a fake portable village, built only to impress or deceive. According to the story, Grigory Potemkin, Empress Catherine the Great's lover and adviser, erected the fake portable settlement along the banks of the Dnieper River in Ukraine in order to fool the Empress during her journey to Crimea in 1787. The phrase is now used, typically in the military, political, and economic realms, to describe any construct contrived solely to deceive others into thinking that some situation is better than it really is.

labor—removal of the gold.

Finally, stencil drawings were removed. Henry Wallace intently followed the process. They drew back a rubber cover, and out poured a heavy, tarnished mass of gold, over the sight of which Mr. Wallace expressed amazement. It was obvious that he was surprised by such a large mass of gold. I was seeing this for the first time in my life. According to stories, I knew the difficulty and throws of the shovel each nugget of gold presented to the miners. Perhaps our "Russian hospitality" was at work here? Just the same, I felt pride for our Motherland and the riches preserved in her [my homeland's] depths.

The delegation remained in Susuman to have dinner, and we departed to the airfield to prepare the aircraft for takeoff. We returned with the Americans to Seymchan in the evening. In accordance with the approved plan, our crew delivered Henry Wallace initially to Yakutsk, and later through Irkutsk to Ulan-Ude [Baykal Lake]. Our guest began his familiarization with the Ulan-Ude city with a visit to the hospital, where wounded frontline soldiers were being treated. Because he relatively freely spoke Russian, his conversations with these soldiers were open, substantive, and friendly. Later, Henry Wallace visited facilities that were accessible to him, and in the evening a concert was arranged at the Ulan-Ude theatre. Before the performance, the concert organizers presented the vice president the gift of a national costume, which they put on him right there on the stage. The next day, we flew from Ulan-Ude to Krasnoyarsk, where we said goodbye to the Americans.

In July 1945, I was in Washington, D.C., with a delegation of the *VTsSPS*[31] led by V.V. Kuznetsov. There, in the Soviet embassy, a meeting occurred with the then former vice president of the USA, Mr. Henry Wallace. He did not recognize me, of course. But when I reminded him about our flights of the previous year, we struck up a friendly conversation. Mr. Wallace explained the reason for his visit to the embassy, showing me a small box with medications for A.A. Gromyko, whose eyelids were becoming inflamed from overstrain. He also reported that his book about his travels through the Soviet Union was being prepared for publication.

New Assignments and Challenges in the Far North

In June 1944, I.P. Mazuruk was summoned to Moscow to the Directorate of Polar Aviation. Col. A.G. Melnikov had been named the commander of 1st Ferry Air Division of *GVF*. Later, by a resolution of the *SNK USSR* of 5 November 1944, Melnikov was promoted to the rank of major general of aviation.

On 3 November 1944, for exemplary execution of the government's mission to ferrying combat aircraft from the USA to the USSR, the 1st Ferrying Aviation Division was awarded the Order of the Red Banner and renamed 1st Red Banner Ferrying Aviation Division of *GVF*. In August 1944, Lieutenant General of Aviation M.I. Shevelyov was named chief of the Directorate of the Krasnoyarsk–Uelkal Air Route, replacing Major General of Aviation I.S. Semyonov.

Summer in the North is short. It was a time when the entire flying and technical staff of the division and the ground services personnel on the route prepared for work during the fall–winter period. The ground services prepared for the delivery of fuel and lubricants. But not everything went smoothly, and not on account of the enlisted personnel. Because of the late arrival of a steamship with fuel for Anadyr port, Markovo airfield in essence remained without fuel for the winter. The convoy with fuel barges that moved up the Anadyr River had not gone 40 km toward Markovo before it froze in the ice. A tractor sent from Markovo for hauling out the fuel broke down along the way. Local authorities were unable to provide assistance. They were able to move only one barrel of fuel per day using sleds drawn by dog teams. They decided to haul the fuel with C-47 aircraft. Benkunsky's crew drew the short straw. The flight time to the so-called "fortress," where the barges were frozen in the ice, was 10–12 minutes.

We made the first test sortie. We looked down from the air at the landing strip marked out with

[31] Editor's note: *Vsesoyuznyy Tsentralnyy Sovet Professionalnykh Soyuzov* (All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions).

Benkunsky, C-47 commander. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

fuel drums directly on the ice of the Anadyr River. The landing was complicated. On the ice were snow drifts, and, when a wheel struck one, it turned the aircraft to the side. We decided to knock down the snow drifts with the wheels of our airplane. We taxied around the area several times. The air stream from the propellers also helped to disperse the snow. We taxied up to the barges. The first time, we took only 10 barrels. It would have been possible to take more, but we were not confident in the strength of the ice. Before takeoff, we distributed responsibilities. The commander with the flight engineer would execute the takeoff, and the on-board radio operator would stand in the tail of the aircraft and observe the barrels. In the event of a rupture of a barrel, the on-board radio operator was supposed to send a signal by the intercom to halt the takeoff.[32] The door to the pilot's cabin was open. The flight engineer turned around to face me. I waved my hand at him to signal "execute takeoff." We began the takeoff. I saw a barrel along the left side straining toward the rear—this indicated it was tied loosely. As the aircraft's speed increased going down the ice runway, one barrel from a row was giving way, and already loose when the aircraft shook, obviously from striking a wheel in a snow drift. The barrel jumped out and rolled into the tail of the aircraft, directly at me. I grabbed a rib of the aircraft, lifted myself up with my hands, and drew my legs up under me. The barrel passed under my feet, striking the wall of the rear baggage compartment; it deformed the door and broke the duraluminum.

After the takeoff, the flight engineer and I moved the barrel back forward. With the aid of an axe, we opened the deformed baggage compartment door and pulled out our winter-quilted coats. We laid one coat under the wayward barrel and placed the second coat in front of the remaining four barrels, re-tying them so they could not slide forward during the landing of the aircraft at Markovo. We landed without incident. Having learned by this experience, we took several additional ropes down to the airfield.

On the second sortie, Benkunsky decided to pick up 14 barrels. This time we tied each barrel separately. Subsequent flights passed well, without unusual incidents. When we arrived at Markovo after the third sortie, they gave us a command from the *KDP* to make a large circle, because at this time a group of fighters topped off with "our" gasoline was taking off. With this group, a portion of our labor went west and beyond to the front.

Soon General A.G. Melnikov received from the headquarters the mission to organize the ferrying of three P-47 Thunderbolt fighters through Magadan to Khabarovsk. For the accomplishment of this mission, it was necessary to deliver General Melnikov from Yakutsk to Uelkal. As ill luck would have it, the "Kolyma air hub" (Seymchan, Magadan, Zyryanka) was closed by persistent dense fog. The mission was urgent; it was unacceptable to spend time in waiting on the weather. We decided to fly to Uelkal without taking time to land for refueling along the way. In order to do this, we took on board

[32] Editor's note: *SPU—samolyotnoye peregovornoye ustroystvo* (aircraft inter-communication system).

four barrels of fuel. We conducted the entire flight at nighttime, refueling in the air using a siphon to transfer fuel from the barrels to the fuselage reserve tanks. We arrived at Uekal in 12 hours. The fighters were already there. On Melnikov's instructions, we loaded heaters on board the aircraft for pre-heating of engines, along with tools and stair steps. From the technical staff, we took one engineer and four aviation mechanics.

The first portion of the flight, from Uelkal to Markovo, passed without incident. Experienced fighter pilots had been selected. If my memory has not deceived me, I recall two of them were Sergey Slavin and Aleksandr Suvorov. I have forgotten the last name of the third pilot. We overnighted in Markovo. When we lay down to go to sleep, we realized that one of the pilots had disappeared. The general was noticeably worried and gave the command to get dressed and search every back alley of the airfield. The night was clear, with a bright moon. The air temperature was minus 20–25 degrees C. Flight engineer Borisov and I walked along the trampled path that led to the village. Perhaps the pilot had wandered there. The village was asleep. Returning to the airfield, approximately half way we spotted tracks that led away from the path. There we found our pilot. He was barely alive. On his head was an alpaca wool cap secured with a cord; he was wearing a zipped-up Canadian fur jacket. The flight engineer pulled off his gloves and felt his fingers; they were not frozen.

In the morning, our pilot looked barely alert and ready for work. The general delayed the takeoff. One day had been lost. Subsequently, the general did not take his eyes off his subordinates all the way to Khabarovsk; he even ate and slept with them. He also held back the 100 grams of vodka that were routinely consumed after flights.

Ferrying of Aircraft to the Far Eastern and Trans-Baykal Fronts

Spring, 1945! Our forces had successfully routed the fascists on the territories of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Germany itself. We were awaiting the end of the war. We were carried away with the combat actions of Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky, beloved by the people.[33]

At the end of February, Benkunsky was transferred to Moscow. Our friendly, tightly knit crew was broken up. I moved to the crew of aircraft commander Vladimir Lvovich Bratash. Upon arrival at the Yakutsk base, we discovered that the ferrying of aircraft to Krasnoyarsk and beyond to the front had practically ceased. The country was being prepared for entry into the war with Japan. Combat aircraft, principally the P-63 KingCobra, were flying from Yakutsk to the south through Aldan and Takhtamygda to *VVS* airfields on the Far Eastern and Trans-Baykal Fronts.[34]

The commander of the air division, Major General A.G. Melnikov, exercised personal supervision of the ferrying operation. Seven C-47 crews of the 8th *TAP* serviced these ferrying movements: aircraft commanders B.D. Kirsanov, V.L. Bratash, F.M. Kozin, P.I. Solovyov, A.I. Romanov, S.T. Velichaev, and D.S. Nepomnyashchy.

In mid-July 1945, the crew of V.L. Bratash again was summoned to Moscow, this time to receive the mission to deliver to Canada and the USA a delegation of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (*VTsSPS*) headed by V.V. Kuznetsov.[35] Our first landing in Canada was at Edmonton, Alberta.

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[33] Editor's note: Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovsky (1896–1968) was an ethnic Pole born in Russia. He fought in WW I as a junior non-commissioned officer in the Imperial Russian Army. He joined the Soviet Army in 1918 and fought in the Civil War, commanding a cavalry squadron and, later, a cavalry regiment. Rokossovsky served in a succession of high-level command positions, including commander of the Bryansk, Don, Central, and 1st and 2nd Belorussian Fronts. He was promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union in 1944 and received two awards of Hero of the Soviet Union. *Voyennyy Entsiklopedichesky Slovar* [Military encyclopedic dictionary], Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1983, p. 638.

[34] Editor's note: The Soviets accepted 7,926 Lend-Lease aircraft at Fairbanks; out of this number, 543 airplanes never reached the end of the ALSIB route at Krasnoyarsk but instead were diverted from the route in Siberia and assigned to the Red Air Force in the Soviet Far East in preparation for the war against Japan. Hays, *The Alaska-Siberia Connection*, p. 131.

[35] Editor's note: V.V. Kuznetsov was the chairman of the Presidium of the *VTsSPS* from 1944 to 1953 and, beginning in

Lend-Lease aircraft over Kamchatka Peninsula, 1945. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

Later we stopped at Winnipeg, Manitoba; Kapuskasing, Ontario; and Montreal, Quebec.

On 6 August, the Americans dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and, on 9 August, another atomic bomb on Nagasaki. Initially, the newspapers published enthusiastic opinions regarding the combat power of these newest weapons. It was reported that no one could exist in the target area of the atomic bomb over the course of the next 73 years. American society reacted entirely negatively to this report. Later, extensive articles undersigned by scientists appeared, wherein they, accusing correspondents of distorting the facts, asserted that flora and fauna would not exist at the places where the bombs fell for only three years.

Newspapers and radio reported the victory over Japan. Something unimaginable happened in the streets of Washington. Everyone who at the moment was driving an automobile began blowing their horns with great zeal. Tin cans, tin pots—anything that made noise—were attached to their vehicles. The air was filled with a continuous howl. Inhabitants threw toilet paper from their apartment windows, which, unrolling in midair, wrapped itself like garlands around the trees.

The next day [10 August], U.S. newspapers corrected reports of the victory over Japan and included the fact that the Russians had unilaterally abrogated their neutrality pact with Japan and declared war on Japan.[36] Representatives of American society accepted this information in various ways—some welcomed the entry of the USSR into the war with Japan, seeing in this action a quick end to World War II; others, who were in the majority, did not want to share the victory over Japan with the Russians, seeing the Soviet Union's actions as self-serving.

President Harry Truman spoke by radio in the evening and explained that the Russians' actions were not self-serving. The issue of the entry of the USSR into the war with Japan had been decided at

1945, a member of the General Council of the Executive Committee and vice chairman of the World-Wide Federation of Trade Unions (*VFP*).

[36] Editor's note: The Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact was signed on April 13, 1941. On 8 August 1945, the Soviet government declared to the government of Japan that, from 9 August 1945, the USSR would consider itself in a state of war with Japan. *Pravda*, 9 August 1945.

the Potsdam Conference in July and August 1945.

On 17–18 August, we delivered the *VTsSPS* delegation to Moscow and returned home to Yakutsk. After a two-day rest, our crew received the mission to rush a group of our communications and ground technicians to Harbin, Manchuria.

At the beginning of the war with Japan, a group of 7–9 C-47 aircraft under the command of Captain Myasnikov was selected from the 8th *TAP*. In the war with Japan, this group operated in subordination to the 21st Port Arthur Transport Air Division, which belonged to the 9th Air Army of the Far Eastern Front. Having joined this group, we conducted several flights with assault forces to Chanchun, Mukden, and Inchenza. We air-dropped fuel to our armored forces that were stuck in the Lesser Khingan area. We carried out to Khabarovsk documents belonging to the headquarters of the Kwantung Army. Combat actions were concluded on 2 September 1945; Japan signed the act of unconditional surrender. September 3 was declared to be Victory Day over imperialist Japan. This signified the end of World War II, in which the anti-Hitler coalition came out as victors.

A picture to remember. American pilot McFarland (left) and Soviet engineer Aleksandr F. Yatskevich (right), Fairbanks 1945. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

My last flight to Fairbanks was executed as a member of the crew of commander Aleksandr Vasilyev, with co-pilot Yury Yakovlev and flight engineer Aleksey Sorokin. The border with the USA had already been closed. We arrived in Fairbanks on 8 October. The airfield appeared to us to be quiet and empty. The flight crews of 1st *PAP* and the members of Colonel Machin's receiving commission had returned to the Soviet Union. We delivered employees of our purchasing commission who had been stationed in Washington.

Now we had to pay for technical servicing of our aircraft and its refueling with American currency. The effective period of Lend-Lease had expired. Yeryomin, the deputy of the chairman of the purchasing commission (Colonel General Rudenko), took all the expenditures on himself. Then something unexpected happened: an American who was driving a loader/forklift near our aircraft caught it with a strut and crumpled the console of the right wing. The Americans apologized for their blunders, made repairs at their expense, and refueled the aircraft. Two days later, having wished each other good health and having given our word to preserve the faith of our friendship and, if possible, to meet again in Alaska or Russia, we said goodbye and returned to the Soviet Union.

The ALSIB on the Diplomatic Service: On the Origin of the United Nations

The conference of the three great power blocs—the USSR, the USA and Great Britain, and China—conducted from 21 August to 28 September 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks, a mansion in Washington, D.C.,

played an important role in the creation of the United Nations (UN).[37] At this conference, a proposal was worked out for the future international organization of states for the purposes of upholding and strengthening peace, security, and the development of cooperation between states.

A crew of the 8th *TAP*, 1st Red Banner *PAP*, consisting of aircraft commander G.S. Benkunsky, co-pilot N. Maksimenko, flight engineer P.N. Borisov, and on-board radio operator V.D. Glazkov, delivered the Soviet delegation to the conference. I recall 30 July 1944. Our crew received a new C-47 aircraft in Fairbanks. Upon arrival in Yakutsk, the commander of 8th *TAP*, V.A. Pushchinsky, summoned us to his office and said that a directive had arrived from the chief of the *GU GVF*, F.A. Astakhov, to designate an experienced crew, receive a new aircraft, and immediately fly to Moscow. The aircraft would be reconfigured as a passenger aircraft for delivery of a delegation to Washington, D.C. We departed from Yakutsk early in the morning, and, that same day, 4 August, we were in Moscow. We immediately handed off the aircraft to the Vnukovo air repair base. A week later, it was unrecognizable. We front-line veterans and former American aircraft ferry crews had given up passenger comforts and, therefore, were quite surprised by the comfortable furnishings of our interior. The passenger cabin was trimmed in blue velvet, the fuselage adorned in bright brown leatherette down to the floor, and the aisles of the floor carpeted. Two auxiliary fuel cells were installed behind the pilots' cabin, which permitted the extension of our aircraft's range of flight by 1.5 times. Sleeping places were mounted on top of the fuel cells. Behind them were light partitions. Ten armchairs were placed along the left side of the passenger cabin; along the right side were a table and two armchairs.

The ALSIB on the diplomatic service. From left to right: U.S. Captain Gavrisheff, Major General A.I. Perminov, Major General I.M. Makarov, Leutenant General A.A. Avsievich, an unidentified Canadian general officer, Major General P.I. Berezin, Colonel M.I. Kokonin, an unidentified Canadian general officer, and Captain G.S. Benkunsky, commander of the aircraft that delivered the Soviet military delegation to Chicago via Winnipeg, Canada. 30 October 1944. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

[37] Editor's note: U.S., British, Soviet, and Chinese representatives met at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington in August and September 1944 to draft the charter of a post-war international organization based on the principles of collective security. Because the Chinese delegation was from the Nationalist government, the Soviet delegation refused to meet with them directly. The conference recommended a General Assembly of all member states and a Security Council consisting of the Big Four plus six members chosen by the Assembly. Voting procedures and the veto power of permanent members of the Security Council were finalized at the Yalta Conference in February of 1945, when Roosevelt and Stalin agreed that the veto would not prevent discussions by the Security Council.

The crew accepted the aircraft without a single annotation on 10 August and, late that evening, flew to Central Airport and began the detailed preparation for the upcoming flight. On 12 August, our aircraft, prepared for execution of the important sortie, was parked near the main exit from the air terminal. Marshal of Aviation F.A. Astakhov, chief of the *GUGVF*, arrived first with his retinue. Initially, he examined the cabin, checked the solidity of the mounting of the armchairs, table, and sleeping berths; in the cockpit, we showed him the commutator and brushes of the transformer. I quickly removed the *SPU* transformer, unscrewed the caps, and handed it to the marshal. He checked the commutator and transformer with a snow-white kerchief and, not observing any traces of dust or oil on the kerchief, was satisfied.

By 1000, A.A. Gromyko [ambassador to the United States] had arrived with members of his delegation. Marshal Astakhov presented to him the commander of the aircraft, G. Benkunsky. After hand shaking all around, the passengers took their places in the passenger compartment. We started engines, moved from our parking spot and, smoothly gaining speed, taxied to the end of the runway. The command-dispatch point gave permission, and we took off. We caught a glimpse of the air terminal building on our left. We passed over the aircraft parking area at low altitude and made a right turn over Belorussia station to depart from the airport zone. After the takeoff, we circled around to the east. The crew itself knew precisely all the complexities of transcontinental flight; our route would take us over the Urals, Siberia, Yakutia, Alaska, Canada, and the continental USA.

Our first stop was in Krasnoyarsk; beyond there we flew along the new air route to Yakutsk. Beneath us was continuous tayga, and for the entire extent of the flight from Krasnoyarsk to Yakutsk, a distance of 2,300 kilometers, there were only three reserve airfields. Ground radio-navigation and communications installations were of low power. In this region, reliable communications between the aircraft and ground depended on the experience of the on-board radio operator. After a 10-hour flight, we landed in Yakutsk.

In Yakutsk, our aircraft was met by the first secretary of the district committee of the Communist Party, G.I. Maslennikov; a representative of the government of Yakutia, I.Ye. Vinokurov; and commander of the ferrying aviation division, A.G. Melnikov and his deputy, K.S. Efimov. They put up the delegation for the night in a magnificent (for those times) airport hotel and our crew in guest quarters at the 8th *TAP*.

Our takeoff on 14 August was delayed due to unforeseen circumstances. For security of the aircraft, in addition to a sentry, at night, a dog was tied to the handle of the entry door. During the night, the dog had twisted with his chain and deformed the dipole antenna of the radio altimeter mounted under the aircraft's fuselage. Replacement of the damaged component took four hours.

Our flight continued. We proceeded at an altitude of 12,000 feet, because ahead of us stood the intersection of the Verkhoyansk and Chersk Ranges. The weather was sunny, the mountains visible. Individual peaks were covered in snow—the first signs of approaching autumn. We decided to head for Markovo without landing. I transmitted the flight data to Yakutsk and Moscow, communications with whom I conducted every half hour.

Andrey Gromyko requested if it was possible to receive information regarding the Allies' landing in southern France.[38] In my spare time from basic work tasks, I constantly monitored the ether. Thirty minutes before arrival at Markovo, I captured the signal from Moscow. Information was being broadcast concerning the Allies' landing in southern France. I reported this to the aircraft commander, Benkunsky. "Go back and inform Comrade Gromyko," he directed. "Wouldn't it be better if the commander did it?" I asked. The commander and I then went together into the passenger compartment. I gave A.A. Gromyko a sheet of paper with the written information. Here is how a

[38] Editor's note: The writer is referring to Operation Dragoon, which was carried out between 14 August and 14 September 1944 by French and U.S. naval and ground forces and British and American airborne forces, under air cover provided by the U.S. Navy from several escort carriers.

member of the delegation, Valentin M. Berezhkov, recalled this episode: [39]

Everyone immediately came wide-awake. S.B. Kyrlov, who was sitting next to me, broke out in a smile and began to exclaim:

"Hurrah, Allies! Good guys! Beat the Hitlerites!"

When everyone quieted down a bit, both of the professors—Krylov and Golunsky—began to discuss whether the operation in southern France was planned ahead of time, or was this simply an improvisation of the British and Americans undertaken in support of the offensive that was unfolding in Normandy.

The decision regarding the landing in southern France, interrupted Andrey Andreevich Gromyko, was made at the end of last year at the Tehran Conference, when the question of Operation Overlord was discussed. The mission became to deprive the Germans of the possibility of throwing reinforcements into Normandy, where on 6 June the Allies opened the second front. We then, in turn, were required to undertake in the summer, right after the forcing of the English Channel by the British and Americans, an offensive on the southern front, which was done.

"The Allies, as you have seen, also fulfilled their obligation," said Gromyko. "It remains only for us to congratulate them."

According to our plan, we had counted on flying from Markovo to Fairbanks, but, because of poor weather in Alaska, we landed in Uelkal. In the morning, Alaska had cleared up, but Uelkal was covered in dense fog. We waited two days for the weather to improve. Andrey Gromyko began to show concern that the delegation might be late for the opening of the conference.

All this time, the aircraft and crew were in full readiness so that if the fog lifted, even for 5-10 minutes, and visibility improved, we could quickly gather up the delegation and execute a takeoff. Only on 18 August did we rush out of Uelkal. We crossed the 180th meridian. We traveled from the eastern hemisphere of Earth to the western, but the change of date here occurs not strictly along the meridian, rather along the international boundary, in the middle of the Bering Strait. In the end, we gained a day. We climbed to an altitude of 8,000 feet. Under us, all the way to the horizon, was clear sea. The last rays of the setting sun, moving into twilight, caught us from the west. Other members of the delegation slept in the passenger compartment, while A.A. Gromyko, bent over a notebook, stayed up writing (obviously, he was preparing his speech for presentation at the conference).

At Fairbanks, the leadership of the American air base and our aviation regiment greeted the delegation. We left behind our co-pilot N. Maksimenko, and, in his place, took on board American guide pilots and an interpreter. David Chavchavadze, the interpreter, was, at the same time, a communications officer. He claimed to be the great-grandson of the Georgian poet Prince I. Chavchavadze. David and I were the same age—about 20 years old—and the youngest in the crew. We also held equal military ranks. Unlike me, David knew very well the history of the Russian state, so conversing with him was interesting. He taught me some conversational English. In a word, we became friends.

From the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* of May 1990, I learned that D. Chavchavadze and his wife Yelena and son Pavel were visiting the Soviet Union. By then, he was a retired colonel of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Thanks to a multi-year investigation of his genealogy, I had drawn the conclusion that he was the great-grandson of the Russian Tsar Nicholas I, who ruled Russia from 1825-55.

After a 24-hour layover in Fairbanks we—now an international crew—flew the aircraft farther, over Canadian territory. After more than nine hours in the air, we landed at Edmonton, Alberta, late

[39] Editor's note: Valentin M. Berezhkov was a long-time interpreter for high-level Soviet government and diplomatic officials, including Joseph Stalin, from 1940 through the 1980s. He served at a high level on the Soviet Embassy staff in Washington, D.C., from 1978 to 1983.

at night—at a large American base located in Canada.[40] We took off early in the morning. At the halfway mark of our flight from Edmonton to Minneapolis, we were to cross the international border of the USA. The flight proceeded in scattered clouds at 6,000 feet altitude. We encountered turbulence, initially mild, that later transitioned into heavy. Benkunsky decided to change the flight altitude and, having turned off the autopilot, took the helm himself. The American guide pilot interfered in Benkunsky's actions and turned the autopilot back on in order to follow the previous flight plan issued by the dispatcher movement service (*UVD*). This not being allowed to change altitude to avoid turbulence was confusing to our crew.

The guide pilot maintained communications with the *UVD*. Perhaps he knew of an approaching aircraft and that we would be given permission to change the flight plan for altitude after the aircraft had passed. However, he did not inform us of this. Benkunsky, not knowing the air situation, naturally, in a willful decision in his role as aircraft commander, again turned off the autopilot, and we began to gain altitude. At this time, the guide pilot energetically declared something to the ground dispatcher—obviously regarding the unwarranted actions of the Russian pilot.

After about a minute and a half, we came out above the clouds. At this same altitude, on a meeting course with us—which we were occupying in violation of *UVD* regulations—flew a C-47. We were separated from him at a distance of 300–500 meters. This dangerous closing occurred at the fault of the Soviet pilot—and of the American guide pilot, who did not inform Benkunsky, as the aircraft commander, about the air situation. Whether he did this intentionally or not, I cannot confirm, but the consequences could have been tragic. Our crew, not knowing the flight regulations in the airspaces of Canada and the USA (which is why a guide pilot was put on our aircraft), acted in accordance with the rules of flight established for the territory of the USSR. A *UVD* service began to take root in the Soviet Union only after the war.

Some type of disagreement had already occurred between Benkunsky and the guide pilot on the previous evening during our approach and landing at Edmonton. We were flying at night, and visibility in our zone was poor. The maneuver of the approach for landing and the landing itself had to be executed using a ground radar aircraft approach control system. When the American guide pilot asked if Benkunsky knew about it, Benkunsky replied "No," and in turn asked to be familiarized with it. Claiming that there was insufficient time for this, the American demanded that Benkunsky give him the capability to land the airplane; if this was not granted, he was not responsible for the safety of the landing.

Such a declaration wounded the pride of Benkunsky, who cared about the prestige of Soviet pilots, and he responded with a categorical refusal. Benkunsky prepared for the landing using our old-fashioned method via non-directional (outer radio) beacon, for which I set up the radio compass, and landed normally.[41] He did not need to borrow experience; he was a master-class pilot.

It goes without saying that it was not our commander's fault that he did not know the regulations for executing flights and did not know how to use the technical equipment of foreign airports. Our system and our isolation from the world community were the causes of this lag. I also understood

[40] Editor's note: This was Royal Canadian Air Force Station Namao, the runways of which had been constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The primary function of this base was to service Lend-Lease aircraft coming through on their way to Alaska, and to provide air support for the construction of the Alaska–Canada (ALCAN) Highway as well, for which it served as the southern terminus.

[41] Editor's note: A non-directional (outer radio) beacon (NDB) is a radio transmitter at a known location, used as an aviation or marine navigational aid. On the glide path close to the point of the fourth turn is an outer radio marker or beacon. The beacon emits a signal that enables the pilot to control his movement and position along the glide path at its starting point near the final turn into the glide path. Closer to the landing strip is the inner radio marker or beacon, the signal or beacon that enables the pilot to make final adjustments or corrections in order to execute a safe landing.

in human terms the American pilot, himself the commander of an airship. He had fallen under the authority of a person who turned out bluntly unprepared for this system of work, which the American knew very well. The concern for the "prestige of the Soviet pilot" was clearly misplaced. In order to be at an altitude, one must always be trained for any eventuality.

By evening, we had made our landing at the Minneapolis airport. When we went into the city, David Chavchavadze, who was sitting close to me, brought to my attention the American flag with a star placed in the window of one of the cottages. He explained that one of the family members from this home had died at the front. This was, if you please, one of the few external signs of the participation of the USA in the war. In other respects, nothing brought to mind that it was wartime. The streets were brightly illuminated, multi-colored advertisements flashed and glittered, and the store windows were full of all imaginable goods and foodstuffs.

August 20 was left to complete the last segment of our journey. The weather was excellent, not a cloud in the sky. Below was spread out the American land with full-flowing rivers and lakes, green forests, and golden fields of grain. We arrived over Washington on a clear, sunny day. The beautiful panorama of the city was revealed from the air. We could see much green space and many parks. The city was laid out in equal squares with streets and avenues. The buildings were of marvelous, unique architecture. The Capitol dome and obelisk monument to the first president of the United States, George Washington and, of course, the White House—the residence of President F.D. Roosevelt—especially caught our eye.

They had decorated the airport terminal with American, Soviet, and British flags; an orchestra played martial music. An honor guard stood stiffly on the square, and beyond, on the airfield, stood rows of various types of American aircraft manufactured by American aviation companies. The U.S. Secretary of State Edward Stettinius,[42] the Permanent Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain, the head of the British delegation for the upcoming talks, Alexander Cardogan, members of the British delegation, representatives of the U.S. Department of State, and workers from the Soviet embassy with their families welcomed our delegation. After mutual greetings, Gromyko and Stettinius walked the honor guard formation. The sounds of the national anthems of the USSR, then the USA, resounded. The orchestra again played a march, and the honor guard proudly marched past us. Ahead of them marched three flag bearers—they carried the national flags of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain. This solemn ceremony symbolized the resoluteness of the peoples of the anti-Hitler coalition to, in concert, carry the victory in war and, through common effort, secure the peace.

Upon completion of the ceremonies, our delegation headed into the city in large black limousines accompanied by an escort of police and motorcyclists with sirens blaring. Our embassy driver dropped us off at the Roosevelt Hotel, the most fashionable at that time. After nine days of flying, we, naturally, were exhausted and slept for the first two days.

While the conference went on at Dumbarton Oaks, we received the mission from Gromyko to fly the route Washington–Fairbanks–Montreal–New York–Washington. The purpose of the flight was to deliver a Soviet trade delegation to Montreal and a diplomatic courier to New York. On this sortie, an hour and a half before arriving at Edmonton, our right engine stopped. The aircraft was practically empty and its flight capabilities were well preserved; our speed was reduced by 15–20 mph. Benkunsky's decision was to make a forced landing at the first reserve airfield. The American guide pilot, along with flight engineer Borisov, insisted on continuing the flight to Edmonton, which was allowed in accordance with the flight operation of this particular aircraft type. A landing at a reserve airfield, and then summons to a representative of the engine manufacturer Pratt and Whitney

[42] Editor's note: Edward Reilly Stettinius, Jr. (1900–1949) was an American businessman who served as Secretary of State under Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman from 1944 to 1945, and as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations in 1945 and 1946.

for determination of the cause of the failure, the delivery of a new engine, and its installation would require a great deal of time, and we would not complete the mission assigned by Gromyko.

The flight to Edmonton proceeded normally. They immediately rolled the aircraft into a hangar. While we waited for a Pratt and Whitney representative, our flight engineer removed the engine cover and discovered the defect: a broken cotter pin in cylinder number 8. The Pratt and Whitney representative, who by this time had arrived on the scene, did not agree with this conclusion, since their firm guaranteed this engine for 350 hours. He also had some doubt as to the knowledge and work experience of our flight engineer. But, after a detailed inspection of the engine, he understood that the flight engineer was correct, apologized to him, and said that he was a good engineer.

The flight from Fairbanks to Montreal took us across all of Canada. We saw the enormous wealth of the Canadian landscape. Wherever we looked, we saw worked and maintained fields, among them islets that indicated countless farms. We arrived at Montreal, the country's largest city, on the second day. We stayed in the Windsor Hotel. Montreal was built on the St. Lawrence River at the end portion of the North American Great Lakes drainage. Among the remarkable sights, we saw the Arts Square, Notre-Dame church of neo-gothic style, a national park, various monuments, and two universities (one was taught in French [University of Quebec]; the other in English [McGill University]). We visited a theater and stores rich in goods.

On the return journey to Washington, our route passed through New York, where we were to deliver a diplomatic courier. Oleg and Igor, workers from our General Consulate, met us at the airport. I can't recall their last names because when introduced they just used their first names. After some customs formalities, we went into the city in the consulate vehicle, where we had a reservation at the New York Hotel. I have unforgettable memories of the rapid traffic along the noisy, brightly illuminated streets of this mega-city, with automobile roads that intersected at various levels.

On the morning of the following day, we were sent out to become familiar with the city. Initially, we visited the center of the city, Manhattan, with its famous Broadway and Wall Street, then went to the famous New York beach on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean with its clean, white sand, swimming pools, and towers for jumping into the water. We ate food in a tavern, prepared from the gifts of the sea.

In the afternoon, we decided to visit the highest, at that time, building—at 102 floors, a height of 449 meters—the Empire State Building. Of the 24 elevators in the vestibule, we selected the highest, which delivered us to the 86th floor without stopping. A restaurant was located there. Through the open glass doors of the restaurant, a director, who I later learned was from Odessa, spotted us. Along with his orchestra, he began to play the very popular at that time Russian song *Polyushko-polye* [Meadowland]. The restaurant's patrons were singing along with the orchestra with smiles on their faces. Later, as if on command, they spread out the tables and placed us in the center of the hall. Each offered to their waiter to pay for our orders. We thanked all those present for their cordial treatment of us and, in order to offend no one, paid for our own order.

In the evening, Oleg and Igor invited us to the Diamond Horseshoe nightclub. In the hall on a spacious stage, where various presentations were ongoing, the poet read out his verses, composed impromptu for his audience. Spotting Soviet officers, he began to read verses composed by him in honor of the hero-pilots, the valiant defenders of Stalingrad. The hall burst out in enthusiastic applause. As a mark of special affection toward the Soviet pilots, he gifted us Parker pens. We experienced similar heartfelt regard for us during other meetings with ordinary Americans.

I recall also the third day of our visit to New York. The Consul General of the USSR in San Francisco, Yakov Mironovich Lomakin, invited us to visit with him. The Consul General of the USSR in New York from 1942-45 was Yevgeny Dmitrievich Kiselyov. Ya.M. Lomakin was in New York at this time on issues associated with Lend-Lease deliveries to our country, since he was responsible for this program. Naturally, he was interested in recent events happening in our country. The conversation lasted about an hour in an unconstrained setting. When we stood up to say our goodbyes, Oleg entered the room

and reported that Aleksandr Kerensky had arrived and asked to be received.[43] By the expression on the Consul General's face, we understood that he did not undertake this meeting with pleasure and, it appeared, had decided to refuse it. But the family name "Kerensky" interested me, and I turned to him with the question,"Is this *the* Kerensky, who was the premier of the temporary government of Russia?" The Consul General affirmed, "Yes, that's the one."

We, Soviet citizens, had it beat into our heads since school days that Kerensky was an enemy of the October Revolution of 1917, an enemy of Lenin. Nonetheless, a desire to see the living Kerensky (for some reason, I was convinced that he had died long ago) overcame my hostile feelings toward him. I asked Lomakin to give us the opportunity to meet with this former premier of Russia. Then, a lean, fine-looking, calm old man, still quite mobile despite his age [63 at that time], entered the office. He gave a quick glance around the office, took a step toward the Consul General and, slightly bowing, pronounced, "Greetings, Mister Consul General." Lomakin lowered his head and continued to sit down in his armchair. Kerensky turned in our direction.

"Greetings, Russian officers!"

I wanted to stand up [in respect] to this old man, but one of my comrades tugged on my jacket.

The consul corrected Kerensky: "Not Russian officers, but Soviet officers."

"I see, Mister Consul General," said Kerensky, "Russian epaulettes on the shoulders of Russian officers!" He bowed at the waist.

Then Aleksandr Fyodorovich Kerensky informed us that he had chartered two steamships for delivery of medications, foodstuffs, and clothing to Russia for Russian orphaned children.

Lomakin thanked him, and, with this, we departed.

On this same day, we visited the island where stood the Statue of Liberty, a gift of the French government to the United States. It was constructed of the best quality sheet copper of the Urals in the Lower Tagil plants. We were delivered to the island by small boat. In addition to the members of our crew, along with us were workers from the consulate and Lomakin's wife, with whom a misunderstanding occurred. We knew nothing about her trip to the island. She, in all likelihood, wanted very much to chat with guests from her native land. But Benkunsky and Borisov took her for a white émigré, and did not engage her in conversation. The wife, naturally, told her husband about our impoliteness. The Consul General expressed regret concerning this, and we had to justify ourselves for our hyper vigilance.

As the cutter continued to move about, New York grew more and more distant. We passed by Ellis Island where the federal prison was located and where unregistered emigrants were held before they received permission to settle in the United States. We docked at the island.[44] It was well maintained: green lawns with mowed grass, flowers, clean sidewalks, and benches. The statue started with a massive granite pedestal. An elevator worked from the base almost to the top; beyond that, to the crown, was a spiral metal stairway. From there opened up a marvelous panorama of the city's skyscrapers. In order to prevent the entry of German submarines into the bay, dirigibles patrolled above them.

In the evening, we were directed to 5th Avenue to the enormous Rockefeller Center skyscraper complex. The evening began in the Radio City Music Hall with a concert program, which preceded a demonstration film. The orchestra played the Slavic dances of Antonin Dvorak and several Felix Mendelssohn compositions. Then a violinist performed, brilliantly handling the most difficult

[43] Editor's note: Aleksandr Fyodorovich Kerensky (2 May 1881–11 June 1970) was a Russian lawyer and politician, who served as the second Minister-Chairman of the Russian Provisional Government in July–November 1917. After the February 1917 Revolution that deposed Tsar Nicholas II, Kerensky served as Minister of Justice in Georgy Lvov's post-imperial and democratic Provisional Government. In May of 1917, he became Minister of War, and in July he succeeded Lvov as Minister-Chairman. On 7 November, his government was overthrown by the Vladimir Lenin-led *Bolsheviks* in the October 1917 Revolution. He spent the remainder of his life in exile, dying in New York City at the age of 89.

[44] Editor's note: At that time Bedloe's Island, renamed Liberty Island in 1956.

passages of Nicolo Paganini. Then out onto the stage came young girls in netted tights. The well-known "Rockettes" threw up their arms and legs in time with precise movements. The Rockettes were a special New York sight; for every visitor, a visit to the Radio City Music Hall was as obligatory as the climb to the top of the 102-story Empire State Building. After the Rockettes' performance, a film was started. The auditorium of Radio City Music Hall was built in the shape of a shell, for the best acoustics. We also visited the theater on ice—at that time the only one in the world.

Having returned from New York to Washington, we tried to use our free time judiciously. Andrey Gromyko turned out to be a great help in organizing excursions in America. On his recommendation, along with members of the delegation, we visited the state of Virginia, one of the sights of which was the Luray stalactite caverns. Here also, in an artistic setting on the bank of the deep Potomac River, was the age-old estate, Mount Vernon, which belonged to the first president of the United States, George Washington. The two-story white house with turret-crowned roof stood on a high hill beside the river.

The estate had been turned into a museum. Many visitors were always present. The condition of the house was preserved as it was during the life of George Washington. We descended to the grotto where he was buried. Near the crypt was a plaque with text of his farewell message, in which George Washington came out in favor of cooperation between governments based on equal rights, sharply condemned the policy of supremacy of one country over others, and recommended "harmonious, free from pre-judgment relations with all nations." Reading these words, I wanted to believe that after this terrible world war, the United States would go along this path that was left to them by the great president.

We went on an excursion to the National Gallery of Art, where were preserved the works of the great masters of the 13th–19th centuries. We were surprised that here were more than 20 works from the collection of the Leningrad Hermitage, obtained by Andrew Mellon in the early 1930s—world-renowned canvases of Raphael, Titian, Van Dyck, and Rembrandt. I could not grasp how these paintings from the Hermitage, which had become the property of the people, had been sold to the Americans. Only in the mid-1950s did I learn from the press that the sale of these paintings had been consummated with the direct participation of Anastas I. Mikoyan.

Of course, one day for familiarization with the museum turned out to be too little, but we did not have any additional time. With a group of workers from the embassy, we visited the Capitol, where the United States Congress worked. That was all.

On 29 September, a joint statement was published in the American press, the text of which announced:

> *Talks that have been taking place in Washington between delegations of the Soviet Union, the United States, and Great Britain regarding the issue of an international security organization have concluded. The talks were helpful and have led in large degree to agreement on recommendations regarding the general plan of organization and, in particular, in relation to the mechanism necessary for upholding peace and security. The three delegations will direct their reports to their corresponding governments, which will examine these reports and, at the appointed time, release simultaneous declarations regarding this issue.*

The departure of our delegation from Washington was scheduled for 1000 on 30 September. Washington said its goodbye to us fondly, with sunny, warm weather. The number of those bidding us farewell was more modest than the number of greeters. Perhaps it was because the head of the Soviet delegation was remaining in Washington, continuing his work as ambassador. Upon the arrival of A.A. Gromyko at the airport, G. Benkunsky reported to him the readiness of the crew and aircraft for execution of the flight. At the air terminal were Edward Stettinius and Alexander Cardogan. Bidding farewell, we carried with us unforgettable memories of the warm, heartfelt attitude of the American people toward us Soviet pilots as representatives of the great Soviet people.

We flew at an altitude of 1,500–2,000 feet in excellent visibility. Our route took us across the Great Lakes with the cleanest, imbued with deep blue color, water, across Niagara Falls. This was like something out of a fairy tale. In the waterfall one felt such a powerful force—all around it, myriad sprays formed in the rays of the sun a powerful, clear rainbow.

We made our first landing and layover in Chicago, staying in the Michigan Hotel. We walked along Michigan Street, strolling along the shore of the lake by the same name with which Chicago was inextricably linked.

We flew on, along a route already familiar, across Canada, Alaska, the Bering Strait toward the shores of our motherland, carrying with us memories of the warm and heartfelt regard of everyday Americans toward us, Soviet people. Moscow greeted us with an intense battle rhythm, darkened streets, un-dismantled defensive fortifications, and anti-tank entanglements. How different everything was compared to the brightly illuminated American capital. But we were already firmly convinced that victory and peace would come soon, and it would be long and enduring.

At the United Nations Conference in San Francisco

In the last days of April 1945, instructions were issued from the *GU GVF* to select an experienced crew and, in a passenger-configured aircraft, fly to Moscow to execute an exceptionally important mission. The commander of 8th *TAP*, V.A. Pushchinsky, formed a crew from aircraft commander V.L. Bratash (later a meritorious pilot of the USSR), co-pilot B.S. Osipov (subsequently a Hero of Socialist Labor and meritorious pilot of the USSR), flight engineer V.A. Bukarov (senior engineer of 8th *TAP*), and on-board radio operator V.D. Glazkov. From Moscow, we were to execute the sortie from 19th International Air Squadron, which was commanded by A.I. Semyonov.

Members of the delegation from the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Standing (left to right): Leonid N. Novychenko, Nikolas Ya. Lukin, Mariya L. Shapareva, Michael A. Shalyapin, Peter P. Udovichenko. Seated (left to right): Peter S. Pogrebnyak, Nikolas N. Petrovsky, Ivan S. Senin, Dmitry Z. Manuilsky (Chairman), Aleksandr V. Palladin, Vladimir G. Bondarchyuk, and Alexey D. Voyna. San Francisco, 26 May 1945. UN Photo/Rosenberg.

They informed us that we would deliver the Ukrainian delegation, headed by the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the UkSSR (Ukraine), Dmitry Z. Manuilsky, to the first organizational conference of the United Nations in San Francisco. Bratash, assigned to co-pilot duties, remained in his left—commander's—seat and fulfilled the actual function of aircraft commander all the way to San Francisco and back. The "honorary commander," Beskodarov, did not interfere with Bratash's functions. Sometimes, in order to give Bratash a rest, he took over piloting of the aircraft himself.

We departed from Moscow on 29 April 1945. Two additional C-47 aircraft followed us at 15 to 20-minute intervals. In one of these was the Soviet delegation, headed by V.M. Molotov, and in the other was a delegation from Belorussia with the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, K.V. Kiselev.

Our crew, who over almost three years of effort had studied it thoroughly, laid down the first leg of the air route. The flight of all three aircraft to Fairbanks proceeded normally with minor delays at airports designated in the flight plan. From Fairbanks to San Francisco, the route passed through Edmonton and Seattle—a city famous for the aircraft assembly plants of the enormous Boeing Company. This portion of the route was unfamiliar to the crew. We conducted pre-flight preparation together with an American guide pilot and an interpreter by the name of Kargin. Our navigator was in shock over the American flight charts, since everything that the crew required in flight was marked on them.

We arrived in San Francisco on 6 May, and our delegations attended the conference on 7 May. I recall that our delegations [Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian] for the most time stayed together. Andrey A. Gromyko, then an ambassador of the USSR to the United States, was acting chief of the USSR Delegations. At the end of the conference, in June, the San Francisco delegates of 50 nations adopted the United Nations Charter and, with it, laid down the basis of the existence of this organization.

The city of San Francisco made an enormous impression on us. It was very beautiful. The city is located on a hilly peninsula to the south of the Golden Gate Bridge, where San Francisco Bay joins with the Pacific Ocean. The city had an artistic, uneven relief, with many parks, theaters, and entertainment venues. In addition to familiarizing ourselves with the city of San Francisco, we also visited the neighboring cities of Oakland, Berkeley, and Richmond.

I recall meeting with an American of Armenian ancestry. We were walking through the commercial district. Suddenly, we heard a voice in Russian: "Stalingrad! Russian officers! Hitler is *kaput*!" We had to respond to this emotional greeting and accept an invitation to visit the speaker's small store of household goods. In the center of a market hall, above a writing desk, was proudly displayed a portrait of Ivan Kh. Bagramyan in the uniform of General of the Army.[45] The store owner was very proud that among Armenians there were also great people. He suggested that we might wish to purchase items from his store. We, of course, had no need for any of his merchandise. But to walk out without making a purchase was impolite, so we each selected a folding knife. The flight engineer also picked out a padlock. When I asked how much was the bill, the owner smiled and, excusing himself, took from our hands our intended purchases and placed them on the desk chair, then invited us to pass through the door behind the desk.

We all had been stuffed full of instructions in the Soviet Union regarding the rules governing our behavior as Soviet citizens abroad, about vigilance, and so on. In this particular case, our safety was hardly threatened, and I was the first to cross the threshold. We ended up in the kitchen-dining area of the living quarters of the building. A middle-aged Armenian lady, the wife of the store owner, came

[45] Editor's note: Ivan Khristoforovich Bagramyan (1897–1982) was born in Kirovabad, Armenian SSR. He served in the Imperial Russian Army during World War I, then joined the Red Army in 1920. From 1923 to 1931, he commanded a cavalry regiment. He completed Frunze Academy in 1934 and the General Staff Academy in 1938. Bagramyan held a number of high staff and command positions during the Great Patriotic War, including command of the 1st Baltic and, later, the 3rd Belorussian fronts. He was awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union Gold Star in July 1944. He was promoted to the rank Marshal of the Soviet Union in 1955. *Geroy Sovetskogo Soyuza: Kratkiy biograficheskiy slovar* [Heroes of the Soviet Union: Brief Biographical Dictionary], Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1987, 2 vols., vol. 1, p. 102.

to greet us. At the table sat two young girls 16–17 years of age, who, upon our appearance quickly jumped up from behind the table and disappeared with laughter to their rooms.

First the store owner introduced us to his wife, and then to his daughters. The conversation between them was conducted in Armenian. They invited us to sit at the table, which was already set. I will not describe the dishes and linen, in order not to embarrass my children and grandchildren, since they will not see such a table, even after 2,000 years. At the table, we raised a toast to our Victory over Hitler! And to peace in the entire world, which the newly created international organization—the United Nations—would ensure.

We asked the owner if his daughters knew the Russian language. He responded that his wife knew a little bit of Russian but, over the many years she had lived in the United States, had forgotten it. The children knew Armenian very well. They say Armenians have dispersed throughout the entire planet, and must know their own language. Without a language, there is no nation.

We stood around the table for a relatively brief time. When we were saying our goodbyes, the owner declared to us that our purchases were his souvenirs for us. He would not take money. We were placed in a difficult situation. We had also to offer the owner a souvenir, and we had nothing to give him. I had to part with my miniature pipe mouthpiece, made from porcelain in the shape of a female head. The flight engineer took the red star from his garrison cap, which the owner immediately attached to the portrait of Bagramyan.

In order not to wander around the streets of a large, unfamiliar city, we decided to get a taxi, which quickly dropped us at the store of the well-known commercial company, Wood. They said that one could purchase absolutely anything he desired at this store. If you needed something and they didn't have it, they would take an order and over the course of 24 hours fill it, even if the item had to be delivered from another country. The customer, of course, was responsible for shipping charges, in the presence of a pre-purchase agreement.

The store surprised us in its dimensions: it had large merchandise halls with high ceilings, and escalators in place of stairs. We walked into the fabric department, where we discovered so many possible fabrics that our eyes could not take it all in. There were few customers. The sales girl came out to greet the customer and offered her assistance in the selection of goods. I explained to the young lady, as best I could in English, that I needed to purchase a cut of cloth for a dress for my mother and two sisters. But it was very difficult for me to make my selection. Clearly, several words were spoken to the senior sales ladies in the hall and, immediately, five or six female salespersons approached us. They told me that I should select from this group a woman who was similar to my mother and sisters in size, body shape, and color of hair and eyes. Then they began to measure out fabric of various colors on them. I relied on the taste of these ladies and, with common approval, made purchases that turned out to be quite successful.

I also recall the purchase of a pair of men's shoes. I selected the shoes based on my own taste, tried them on, and walked over to the clerk to pay for them. He shook his head "no" and asked me to walk with him to some kind of wooden bedside table. He had me put on the shoes and place my feet beneath this table. Glancing down at this table from above, he said that these shoes did not fit me. I needed to select a different pair. I understood that this table was some sort of X-ray device that illuminated my foot so he could see where my foot was located in the shoes.

We took a taxi back to our hotel with our purchases. Having paid the taxi driver, we walked into the lobby of the hotel and there a Black man ran up to us. He was two meters (about six and a half feet) tall and grabbed the purchases from my hands to carry them to our room. I knew that I had to give him a gratuity for his services. Because we were short on American currency, I explained to this Black man that I did not need his assistance. But he brazenly pulled the purchases from my hands and carried them to my room. In my room, I gave the Black man a half dollar. He twirled it in his fingers, muttered something, and then tossed it in my direction.

I thought to myself that here is a smart aleck: he provided me with his services against my will, and even more, insulted a Soviet officer. It had been drummed into my head during my school days that in the USA Black people had no rights. Right away, the question arose, why did they conduct themselves like louts with foreigners, with a white person, if they were without rights and every day white people abused them?

Several minutes later, there was a knock on the door. The flight engineer opened it. At the threshold was the same Black man. The flight engineer asked, "What do you need?" The Black man answered, "A ration of vodka." Fine. I led him to the kitchen and poured him a glass of vodka. He tossed it down, in Russian style. His stomach was distorted in a cramp. His eyes just about jumped out of their sockets. I showed him some sandwiches that he could nibble on. He refused the offer. I shook his hand and he left. An hour later, the Black man again knocked on our door. What's going on? It turned out that he had violated one of the points of his contract, that is, he consumed alcohol during duty hours, and for this violation he was subject to dismissal. Our desire to assist him did not have any success. In America, labor discipline is the law, and no labor union could help him.

As pilots, we did not participate in any of the conference sessions. We did not even have a pass to get in. But we had information that the sessions were progressing loudly, with many contradictions and disagreements on almost each point of the UN Charter. Rumors had it that V.M. Molotov was leaving the conference early. Why? According to information from the Soviet side, Molotov had to be in Moscow for the resolution of important state issues. According to information from foreign sources, Molotov was abandoning the international conference in San Francisco because of various approaches to the invitation of Poland and Argentina to membership in the UN. Molotov's deputy, Andrey Ya. Vyshinsky, was left in his place at the conference.

After adoption of the UN Charter and designation of permanent representatives from 50 nations, all the delegations began to leave for home. We flew out with the delegation of Dmitry Z. Manuilsky to the Motherland and on 2 June were already in Moscow. On June 5, we delivered the Ukrainian delegation to Kiev.

Backup Ferry Pilots in the Great Patriotic War

The following quote is from the memoirs of aircraft commander A. Lebedev:

> *We had already been relieved, when I saw an aircraft coming in for landing. The pilot set it down somewhat gingerly, as normally occurred when the pilot was inexperienced and was unsure in his actions. The aircraft banged the ground with its wheels, bounced, lost speed, and plowed into the ground. During the rollout, it did a ground loop. We ran over to the aircraft. We jumped into the cabin and in the cockpit we saw an unconscious Grisha Taran. Flight engineer Kutilin told us that the crew had been subjected to an attack by two Junkers over Lake Ladoga. The co-pilot, Ilya Dudinka, had been seriously wounded, then the crew commander. They had already flown to the airfield when Taran lost consciousness. The flight engineer landed the airplane.*

I [Glazkov] received my first aerial christening at the end of 1931. One time, walking from school, I watched as an airplane landed. The landing was forced because of engine trouble. Much later, I learned that this airplane (with the inscription *Chervona Ukraina* [Red Ukraine] on the side) was a K-4, designed by K.A. Kalinin. The crew consisted of three persons: pilot M.A. Snegiryov, navigator I.T. Spirin, and flight engineer S.V. Keglevich. While they changed out the engine, the pilots stayed in a house with my father, and I spent all my free time with them, learning much that was interesting about aviation. After the engine exchange, the pilots, concealing it from my mother who was deathly afraid of airplanes, took me for a fly around. From this moment, my life was associated with aviation. Before the war, I made several score model airplanes, instructions for which I found in newspapers and journals. I joined a glider club and made several takeoffs.

From the first days of the war, I left no stone unturned with our military commission; I requested that they send me to a fighter-pilot school. But the military commission refused each time, citing my young age. Somehow I found out that at the airport they were assembling for a radio operator's course, with follow-on retraining as aerial gunners/radio operators. I stood outside the service building all night in order to be the first to sign up. Our group consisted of six persons: Victor Glazkov, Yevgeny Kuleev, Yury Polukhin, Mikhail Trubochkin, Lev Badin, and Nikolay Kurbatov. If, after completion of training, the first four departed to the front, as true patriots of their Motherland, then Badin and Kurbatov turned out to be patriots in word only. They found any excuse to avoid the front, and in this they succeeded. They wasted the entire war in the rear. When rumors circulated that participants would be awarded the Order of the Patriotic War, Badin undertook feverish activity with the purpose to do whatever it took to receive confirmation of his participation in the war. Twice he traveled to Moscow to I.P. Mazuruk, in order to obtain confirming paperwork, but all his efforts were for naught.

After two months, having completed theoretical training, I was sent to a radio facility as a probationer. By the end of the year, I had left for Novosibirsk, where initially I took a course of study in the training detachment for the SB (PS-40) aircraft and Il-4; later I took an accelerated course in the Flight Center for the Li-2 (PS-84). We studied up to 12 hours per day.

On one of the lovely, clear days, during a break between exercises, I saw an in-flight Li-2 at an altitude of 5–10 meters. In front of our building, the pilot did a steep climb and departed from it with a 180-degree combat turn. One of the students, a front-line veteran, said that this was Grisha Taran. Thus I heard for the first time this sonorous name. At that moment, I still did not know that this combat commander would play a significant role in my front-line life—that, as a member of his crew, I would begin to execute flights to blockaded Leningrad and Stalingrad, on the approaches to which the fascist hordes were already concentrated.

Meanwhile, I ran to the airfield in order to look upon this renowned front-line pilot. I saw how this man of average height and compact body exited his aircraft unhurriedly. On his collar tabs were two red enamel bars, indicating lieutenant; on his chest was an Order of the Red Banner. This person summoned me to him. He first greeted me and shook my hand. He asked who I was, where I was from, what I was doing here. Then, in a normal, non-command voice, as if we had known each other all our lives, he said, "Well, soldier, will you help me carry my things home?" I eagerly consented. Along the way, he showed more interest in my biography and my life in Eastern Siberia, where I grew up.

At Grigory Alekseevich's house, he said that now his wife would prepare something, and we would have lunch. But I turned down the meal, knowing I was already late for exercises. Also, though I very much wanted to eat, it would have been embarrassing to sit down at the table in someone else's home.

The theoretical portion of our instruction was completed in the second half of April. Now began the practical—flights in day and night conditions. At the airfield, they began to feed us supplementary rations. They gave us half of a small, grey loaf of bread, lightly spread with butter, on top of which were several red roe eggs. Over a five-day period, I flew for 72 hours.

Training was completed by the 1 May holiday. The distribution of specialists to units was begun. I requested duty only at the front in long-range aviation [*ADD, aviatsiya dalnego deystviya*]. Those who were able got to Moscow. Fellow student Verner Kuyanov and I decided to wait for a passing aircraft. Then, one night, Taran flew in.

On the flight to Moscow, Taran called me to the pilot's cabin, and again asked me about my training. I showed him my academic report card, which showed a "5" for all subjects.[46] Having praised me, he asked, "What course are you holding now?" Because I now wanted to stay close to him, not thinking, I responded that I wanted to serve in his aviation squadron.

[46] Editor's note: In both civilian and military schools, students received a grade of 1 through 5, with 5 being the highest.

We were flying under visual rules at 900 meters; the overcast was 6–8 balls, maximum visibility 10 km.[47] We were quiet. Then Taran glanced at me, smiled, took the flight map from the co-pilot, and said, "Show me where we are located right now." I had made only one training flight along this route. Though I had studied orientation from time to time, I was more engaged in radio communications. Nonetheless, I became oriented quickly, looked at the speed indicator—220 kmh—and at the clock: we were 55 minutes into the flight. I calculated in my mind how many kilometers we had flown from Novosibirsk and then spotted Ubinsk Lake out ahead and to the right of our course. I pointed out where we were located on the map. The pilots approvingly exchanged glances while sweat ran down my forehead from the pressure.

Our first stop was in Omsk, then in Sverdlovsk at Uktus airport. We arrived in Kazan in the evening. Moscow did not receive night arrivals. Taran asked Verner and me where we would spend the night. We shrugged our shoulders. "Do you have an authorization for rations?" We responded that we did not. "So you've been going hungry the entire day?" We lied and said that we had eaten something in the snack shop in Sverdlovsk. Taran took us with him to the ADP (*aerodromnyy dispetchersky punkt* [airfield dispatcher's point]), and the crew received coupons for supper, which consisted of oatmeal porridge, a piece of horsemeat, tea, and 200 grams of bread. We slept on straw in a barn located near the airfield. In the morning we departed to Moscow and, at 1000, were at Vnukovo airport.

The chief of staff, Captain Volkov, a well-proportioned, smart-looking officer with a single bar sewn on his collar tabs, met us. Taran reported that new replacements had arrived and that the lads had requested assignment to our air squadron. The captain wrote out an instruction to the cadre of *GU GVF*, 2d Air Squadron, Moscow Special Purpose Air Group.

In the morning, I received a clothing issue, put on a military uniform, and externally began to look like all the other aviators. Later, in the headquarters, I completed a questionnaire, and confirmation of my theoretical knowledge of my specialty received at the Aviation Center was begun. In a free moment, I ran to the flight line at headquarters to meet with Taran. I regarded him not only as my superior but also as sort of a father. With him, I felt myself calm and confident.

On the second or third night, we were awakened by an alarm; the fascists were bombing Vnukovo airport. They dropped cassettes with mines. Searchlight beams cut into the night sky. We heard the hum of aircraft engines. Anti-aircraft guns were firing. Two searchlights captured a fascist in intersecting beams. He began to take evasive action, but he could not escape. A third projector joined the other two. Suddenly, the aircraft went over to its left, and it became obvious that a shell explosion had severely damaged the wing. Several seconds later, it fell sharply downward.

In the morning, personnel carefully cleaned the airfield. It was forbidden to touch the mines that were discovered; sappers were responsible for this work. The aviation personnel, made up mostly of newly arrived replacements now free from flight duties, were engaged in camouflaging the airfield. We painted buildings and trees on the hard-surface landing strip and hacked out niches in the forest and stretched out camouflage netting to cover the aircraft.

On one occasion, G. Taran visited our room in the evening. I was glad to see him. He informed us that our on-board radio operator, Shramko, had lost his parents in a bombing raid and he had to leave immediately for their funerals. I.I. Gordeev had been assigned to Taran's crew to replace Shramko, and I was assigned as Gordeev's probationer.

Then came my first combat mission to blockaded Leningrad. In addition to us, a co-pilot, N.A. Anurev, flight engineer Polyakov, and on-board radio operator Semyon Trotsky were assigned to the crew. Everything was removed from the cargo compartment of our airplane except the ribs, stringers, and paneling, which were component parts of the aircraft. In the middle of the compartment stood a

[47] Editor's note: On the Beaufort scale, which the Soviets used at that time for both wind and sea, 6 represents strong wind, 21–26 knots; 7 represents high wind, 27–33 knots; and 8 represents gale wind, 34–40 knots.

wooden platform for the aerial gunner and, above it, in the fuselage, was mounted a turret with a *UBT* heavy machine gun.[48] Two machine guns were mounted in the tail section.

The pilots took their positions. They started up the engines. Suddenly, the aircraft shook and we heard a short burst of shots—this was Semyon checking the serviceability of the machine gun. We made our first landing at the Frunze Central Airport, where the aircraft was loaded with foodstuffs for Leningrad. We took off and set a course for Khvoynaya. Initially, we flew at an altitude of 150 meters, later dropping down to 10–15 meters. I enjoyed this flight profile, as I felt the speed. Populated points, streams, lakes, and roads quickly appeared and disappeared.

My instructor, Gordeev, was busy with the radio. He heard nothing on his earphones. I asked Gordeev to check the pin plug for turning on my earphones. But he disconnected me from the receiver. I took off the earphones and waited. I saw the co-pilot get up from the right seat and walk into the cargo compartment. Taran summoned me with his finger. He pointed at the seat and suggested that I sit down. Now, he said, watch me closely. He pulled the control yoke toward himself and the airplane gained altitude. He pushed the column away, and the airplane went downward. He moved the column left and made a left turn, to the right for a right turn. Understood? I told the commander that I understood. My palms were already sweating. I wiped them dry on my pants so that the control column would not slip out of my hands. I guided the aircraft by the horizon, looking at the *variometer* [an instrument that showed rate of climb/descent] for control. I got carried away a bit and deviated from course. The commander emphasized that I not "chase" the compass indicator. Look at the *GPK* (*giropolukompas* [gyrocompass]) and ensure that the zeros are aligned. Later, he made a correction to the *GPK*. I kept the zeros aligned. The commander nodded his head approvingly.

Finally, the instructor gave me permission to sit at the radio. I put on the earphones and again heard nothing. I checked the volume button, tuning knob, and tumbler for turning off the radio—still, silence in my earphones. I told Gordeev about this. He slapped me in the head and said that I had burned up his receiver. He reported this to the commander. This evoked in me a bewilderment and shame, but then I recalled that the radio receiver had not worked right away after takeoff, when I had asked the instructor to check the connection of my earphones. It turned out that Gordeev simply was small-minded and had decided to resolve his own errors by blaming his inexperienced probationer.

I called his attention to the voltmeter in the on-board circuit. The needle was pegged. Gordeev began to tap the instrument with his fingers. I could see that my instructor was relatively weak in his knowledge of the material aspects. This gave me greater confidence. I told the commander that there was a short circuit somewhere in the on-board circuitry and suggested we turn off the sources of electric power in turn to determine the cause. The flight engineer turned off the batteries and, immediately, the normal voltage—27 volts—showed in the circuit.

After landing at Khvoynaya, I got off the airplane first and went to the battery compartment; electrolyte was leaking on the right, from under the door. Taran came over and, seeing the leak, summoned Gordeev and asked him with some sarcasm, "So, did your probationer also set fire to the batteries?"

They quickly replaced the unserviceable battery with another, topped off our fuel, and we took off for Leningrad. We flew as a wedge of Li-2s, Taran leading. Two I-16 fighters from the 127th Aviation Regiment of Lieutenant Colonel V.V. Puzeykin escorted us. During our approach to Ladoga, the formation of aircraft tightened up. The crew's feeling of guardedness was transferred also to me. I asked the commander, "Do you want me to man the machine gun?" He answered, "I'll tell you when it's time." The cabin was quiet, the silence broken only by the hum of the engines. Taran instructed me to monitor the airspace on the left sector. We flew at an altitude of two to three meters over Lake Ladoga—not more. We landed at Komendantsky airfield.

[48] Editor's note: *Universalnyy Berezina turelnyy* [Berezin universal ring-mounted]. This was a heavy (.50 caliber/12.7mm) machine gun designed by Mikhail Berezin for aircraft use in a universal ring mount.

On the return trip, they loaded us up with children. Of the adults, one was a man and two were women. The children were so emaciated that my heart was bursting with pain. When we pulled up the stairway and went to close the door, four small boys ran up and in weak voices asked to be taken on board. I couldn't hold back and extended them a hand in order to lift them up into the aircraft. All four grasped it simultaneously; lifting them up, I almost could not feel the weight of their bodies. While I was freeing myself of these four, an additional 8–9 children, just as emaciated, ran to the plane. I gathered them all in. I saw the flight engineer shake his fist at me from the pilots' cabin.

We reached Khvoynaya without any issues, though we anticipated attack at any moment. While they were refueling the aircraft, Taran asked how many children I took on board the airplane. I answered, "10 or 12." "Go count them," he ordered.

I climbed up into the aircraft and saw my little children sitting quietly, pressed to each other. When I began to count, the children pleadingly groaned, "Dear Uncle, don't take us off; carry us to Moscow." They suspected that the aircraft was going to be reloaded and a portion of the passengers left behind. I quieted them and suggested they get some fresh air. Not a single child moved a muscle.

I reported to the commander that we had 54 children on board. Taran asked if I knew the maximum load of the airplane. I could have kept quiet, but thoughtlessly decided to show my knowledge and answered that I knew. In affirmation of my words, I made the calculations and still inopportunely recalled the flights of M.M. Gromov and V.P. Chkalov who, going for a record, took off with 1.5 times the maximum load.

"Where did Chkalov and Gromov take off?" asked Taran.

"From Ramenskoye airfield."

"So then, airfields at Komendantsky, Khvoynaya but not Ramenskoye. We are not going for the record. In the event even one engine fails, we will not reach Khvoynaya. *Do you understand?*"

I responded that I understood; that I had not done it purposely to put the commander on the spot, but out of pity for the children.

During the flight from Khvoynaya to Moscow, Taran again sat me in the right seat. I already more or less grasped the location of the instruments. Then Taran sent me to Gordeev, so he could give me the opportunity to communicate with Moscow to get the weather report and an azimuth. He gave this assignment to the probationer and not to the instructor. He simply understood that Gordeev had handled me poorly and took my side.

Gordeev gave up his seat. Initially, I checked the tuning of the transmitter, then the receiver, and then listened as Moscow transmitted the weather to another aircraft. I wrote it down to show to the commander. Upon arrival at the headquarters of 2d Aviation Squadron, Taran said that Glazkov was ready for independent flights as a member of the crew.

Thus my front-line life began to take shape under the guardianship of Taran and his cohesive, friendly crew. Unfortunately, we did not fly together for long. When on-board radio operator Shramko returned, they took me to the crew of Pavel Fyodorovich Zhuravlyov, also a student of G.A. Taran.

Our last meeting with Grigory Alekseevich Taran occurred in Khabarovsk in September 1945, when he brought in the People's Commissar of Foreign Trade, Anastas I. Mikoyan. Grigory Alekseevich was by then in the uniform of a major and on his chest were two Orders of Lenin, three Orders of the Red Banner, and the gold star of Hero of the Soviet Union. Saying my farewell, I gave him as a gift in memory a walrus tusk, on which were inscribed Chukotsky *yarangi*, a dog team, and an aircraft with flight crew. A few years later, in late 1948, I learned that G.A. Taran had died on a hunt from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.[49]

To the recollections of aircraft commander A. Lebedev, presented above [p. 72], I would like to add the recollections of his comrades: air regiment commander A.K. Bukharov, flight engineer I.S.

[49] Editor's note: The cause of death was provided by Glazkov; the year came from *Geroi sovetskogo soyuza: Kratkiy biograficheskiy slovar* [Heroes of the Soviet Union: brief biographical dictionary], Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1988, vol. 1, p. 558.

Bulkin, and Lieutenant-General of Aviation A.I. Semyonkov. A. Bukharov, talking about the crew of D.V. Kuznetsov, recalls flight engineer I.V. Gordov, who independently learned how to fly airplanes. I.S. Bulkin acknowledges that A.Ye. Golovanov, subsequently chief marshal of aviation, permitted him to fly independently and even land and take off.

A.I. Semyonkov:

On the return trip to Khvoynaya at night, we were crossing the front line, when our aircraft fell under intensive enemy antiaircraft artillery fire. I was wounded in the shoulder and face. Co-pilot A.A. Osipyan hung lifelessly in his chair. Flight engineer M.F. Krivenchuk, who had received a serious head wound, lay stiff in the passageway. Shell fragments had twisted the nose portion of the fuselage, passed through the hydraulic system, and partially damaged the electro-radio components. On-board radio operator Pyotr Fomin showed himself in this crisis. He acted quickly and calmly. He dragged the wounded into the passenger compartment and rendered them first aid. It was still an hour's flight to Khvoynaya! Sharp pain coursed through my right arm. I touched my shoulder and my vision grew dark. Blood was seeping through my uniform sleeve. Weakness was overcoming me and I thought I was going to lose consciousness. Fomin radioed to base—the aircraft has been shot up and almost everyone is wounded. It was difficult for me to speak; I motioned with my head for him to sit in the co-pilot's seat. Fomin had never flown the aircraft, but there was no way out. Pyotr understood without words that he had to do something. He followed each of my gestures, helping to fly the airplane. He turned out to be a special student. At some moment, I lost consciousness, and he grabbed the helm.

By some miracle we made it to Khvoynaya. We made a circle over the airfield. Suddenly, for only a few seconds, I lost consciousness again and was unable to set up for the landing. We went around and again came in to land. I gave the signal to lower the landing gear. But the hydraulic system was inoperative. Fortunately, the gear came down of its own weight. Finally I felt the saving firmness of the ground. Fomin helped me to climb out of the pilot's compartment. I moved toward the exit, but then passed out again.

In the pre-war instructions there was no paragraph about turning over the control of the aircraft to the flight engineer or on-board radio operator. In peacetime this is natural. Each member of the crew should perform his own duties in accordance with the official instructions.

War, however, dictates its own laws, which it was necessary to quickly implement for our own benefit. It would have been unpardonable to abandon to their deaths the aircraft, passengers, flight engineer and on-board radio operator because of the disablement of the pilots. The aircraft should be kept flying so long as there is one able-bodied member of the crew in the pilot's cabin. Therefore we had an unwritten law: each member of the crew should pilot the aircraft.

Indeed, at that time, it was actually impossible to talk about this openly, especially to the leadership, of which Aleksey Ivanovich Semyonkov was a member.

Flights of crews, frequently without a co-pilot, enabled constant practical training of the mechanic and radio operator. The autopilot at that time worked poorly and was generally not turned on at low altitudes. Thus "reserve pilots" were good assistants to the aircraft commanders.

I also had the desire to master the techniques of piloting.

We, transport crews, belonged to the 8th *TAP*, 1st Ferrying Aviation Division, *GVF*. We delivered the ferry pilots to their bases, and, on the return flight from east to west, we hauled American cargo for the front. I spent all my time when I was free of radio communications tasks taking turns with the flight engineer sitting in the co-pilot's seat. I was able to operate the telegraph key and conduct radio communications with the ground through the *SPU* without, as they say, leaving my seat.

But, in later times, I was put on the "back burner," because among the ferry pilots were those who had the desire to be trained to fly the C-47 aircraft. I reacted normally to this. But when the commander began to train them for takeoffs and landings, I grew indignant; I expressed my grievance, saying that I also wanted to fly. To this he responded that I was still young and would get my turn.

On 13 May, we were flying from Kirensk to Yakutsk. We were flying visually. After passing over Mukhtuy-Olyokminsk, I requested that we execute a landing and gather up the service passengers for Yakutsk. The commander agreed and suggested that I occupy the seat and fly the plane. When we were 70 kilometers from Olyokminsk, I said to the commander that it was time to reduce altitude. He responded, "You are flying the plane; make the calculations." Everything was clear, and I set about the task. I made the calculations: head wind on the *VPP*, which means I calculate for a direct landing. At 200 meters altitude and a distance of four to five kilometers, I gave the command to the flight engineer to lower the landing gear; at 700–800 meters from the edge of the *VPP* and flight altitude of 70–80 meters, I gave the command to extend the flaps. The aircraft flared, and I increased the glide angle. I was only thinking *it's time to level the aircraft*, when the commander lightly took the helm to himself and the aircraft smoothly touched down. After a careful discussion of my landing, the reasons for my mistake became clear: the commander said that soon I would be landing independently. He gave me permission to take off from Olyokminsk, under his control, of course. This time there were no comments.

I had firmly decided to become a pilot. But alas, for various reasons, my dream was not fulfilled. I did, however, execute an independent flight in August 1943 on a sector of the Markovo-Uelkal-Nome air route.

Our crew worked on behalf of the 1st Ferrying Aviation Regiment, based in Fairbanks, from June through September. On one of the sorties, we delivered cargo from Fairbanks to Markovo. It was 2100 and we decided to overnight. But a radiogram arrived with the requirement to fly back with urgent cargo. I went to my aircraft, next to which was parked a Li-2 that had flown in from Moscow. Its commander was Kulakov, whom my commander had worked with in Central Asia. In general, we were meeting old friends. We ate finger food and drank in the cargo compartment and engaged in friendly conversation. I was taken aback. How could we fly if the commander and flight engineer were drunk? I told Kulakov that Gayshin, the chief of the airfield, was looking for the crew. A radiogram had arrived and we had to fly right away.

"Well, okay," said the commander. "We will fly."

"But . . ."

"Calm down, don't make any noise. The flight engineer and I will go to the aircraft, and you go to the *KDP* and get the tasking for the flight."

At the *KDP*, Gayshin asked why the commander himself did not report. I lied to him and said I did not know; that the commander had sent me. Then from the loud speaker rang out the completely sober voice of the commander: "*Ruchey, ruchey*, this is tail no. 176. Engines are turning, do not delay the radio operator."[50] I gathered up the assignment and took off for the airplane. I made one more attempt to postpone the flight to the next day. But the commander confidently said, "Vitya, didn't I teach you to fly?"

"Yes, you taught me."

"Then you fly the airplane."

A feeling of lack of confidence rose up in my heart, though I already had gained the experience of nine takeoffs. But I had taken off when nearby was a sober commander, and now? Gradually I calmed down, believed in my own strength, and agreed. I sat in the right seat, to which I had already become accustomed. I maintained contact with the *KDP Ruchey*. The commander executed the takeoff, but my hands were also on the controls. We reached 100 meters and, with a left turn, headed for Uelkal. I made note that the signal light for the landing gear showed green—which meant the landing gear was down. I told the flight engineer about this, and he did not believe it. At this time the sun was low over the horizon, and its rays were blinding.

[50] Editor's note: *Ruchey* translates to "stream" in English. Here, it is apparently being used as an airport calling signal or code name.

The flight engineer leaned over to confirm if I was right or if I was playing a trick on him. He fell lightly forward, in order not to fall into the control panel, and tripped a common switch. This turned off the engines. Total quiet ensued. The aircraft began to lose speed. I abruptly pushed away the flight engineer and turned the switch back on. The engines functioned smoothly, as if they had never been turned off. I guided the aircraft to gain altitude. I saw the commander's hand stretch toward the switch. He had decided to turn the engines off again. I became exasperated. If working oil had accumulated in the cylinders, it could have induced a hydrostatic lock.

The flight engineer and commander were clearing up which of them was drunk. I suspected that, while I was walking to the *KDP* for the flight mission, they had drunk one more for the road. Now it had disabled them. I told the flight engineer to go to the cargo compartment to rest. The commander was dreaming in his seat. It was quiet in the cabin; the only noise was the soothing hum of the working engines.

I climbed to 6,000 feet and turned on the autopilot. During the approach to the Anadyr beam, we flew into a layered rainy overcast. I tried the Uelkal beacon—it wasn't working. I raised Uelkal on the radio, reported my anticipated time of flight, ordered a beacon, and got a weather report and an azimuth. We were deviating 15 degrees to the right, so I made a course correction. At 8,000 feet, rain with light snow appeared. I moved up to the standard 10,000-ft flight path.

The commander woke up, looked at the instrument panel, praised me for my diligence, and again lay back to rest. I recorded my over-flight of Uelkal and reported to them my fuel status. I did the navigational calculation. I had enough fuel to reach Fairbanks with 1.5 hours in reserve. I decided to go to Fairbanks. During this time, my "mates" could rest.

My initial feeling of calm had changed to one of full confidence in the success of my flight. While everything was in order, my chest expanded from feelings of pride; I wanted to sing and dance. No one would believe it if I told them I had flown the airplane alone. Then I had such a childish urge: the commander and flight engineer did not exist, and I brought the airplane in myself and landed it.

I walked back to the cargo compartment—the mechanic was sleeping. I returned to the cockpit; the *variometer* needle was showing that the airplane was gaining altitude, and the speed indicator showed 170 mph. Now the *variometer* needle had gone to the "0" mark. I visually sighted King Island as I passed over it. I gave Nome my calculated over-flight time, got a more precise weather report for Fairbanks: cloudy, wind velocity 48–55 mph, lower edge of overcast at 300 meters with tendency to drop to 150–200. I decided that I needed to land in Nome. I received permission to descend. For some reason, at the last moment, I became concerned in my heart, since I was responsible for the lives of the others.

I placed the autopilot on reducing altitude and began to wake up the commander. He did not want to get up—he had been fast asleep. He grumbled, "I taught you and the mechanic to fly; land it yourself."

I did not want to get the flight engineer up. I got angry and unceremoniously (the flight engineer was not the commander) threw him from his bench onto the floor. Just the same, he made his way to the pilot's compartment, already occupied by us.

I put on the earphones and listened as *KDP* called:

"Did you decide to pass over us?"

"No, we are landing."

"Then why are you flying at such a high altitude?"

I joked that over the sea an altitude was not a hindrance, though to me this was no joke. The flight engineer turned off the autopilot and we descended abruptly. I received the landing conditions and a warning: in view of repair of the landing strip, they were handing me off to the neighboring dirt airfield, "Sputnik." I made another attempt to awaken the commander. It was unsuccessful. We descended to 1,000 feet and flew in a circle. The *KDP* asked again why we did not make our landing approach. The flight engineer lied and said that the four-position crane was fouled, the landing gear would not release, and we were correcting the problem. I sat down in the commander's chair.

We went in for the landing normally, but on the leveling out, when I began to pull back on the yoke and we should have slowly touched the ground, the mechanic pushed sharply on the yoke. Fearing that we would nose over, I pulled the column toward me again. The aircraft struck the ground with its wheels, jumped up, struck down again and, having lost speed, plowed into the ground. They cheered us up and shouted to us from the *KDP*, "*Okay*!"

Overall Analysis of the Work of the 1st Red Banner Ferrying Aviation Division

On the whole, the Soviet government regarded the work of the larger collective of the Krasnoyarsk–Uelkal Air Route in a positive manner. The Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 5 November 1944, in which the following was stated, confirms this:

> *For exemplary execution of combat missions of the command at the front in the struggle with the German occupiers and the valor and courage displayed during this effort, the Order of the Red Banner is awarded to the 1st Ferrying Division of the Krasnoyarsk–Uelkal Air Route.*

Simultaneously, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR directed the Red Banner be handed to the 1st Air Division of the Krasnoyarsk–Uelkal Air Route as a symbol of military honor, courage, and glory, and as a reminder to each soldier and commander of their sacred oath, given to serve the Motherland.

However, a high price had to be paid for their enormous effort. The wreckage and accidents of aircraft that carried with them human lives happened for various reasons. These would have been much fewer in number if the regulations and the flight instructions for executing flights had been strictly observed, if the material aspects of the American aircraft, which functioned quite reliably during reasonable exploitation, had been more intently studied. Specific aspects of flight in the northern latitudes of the country in extreme climatic conditions, especially in the fall-winter period, were distinctive.

To some degree, the issuance of 100 grams of vodka to flight crews after flights, offered as a wartime custom, was reflected unfavorably in the discipline of flight crews. Among those who knew when to stop and possessed a sense of restraint, all, as they say, was normal. But there were also those who, under the guise of the issued 100 grams, drank without restraint, thanks to the free access to spirits, which were used on aircraft as an anti-icing liquid. These pilots, naturally, undertook flights without proper rest. In my crew, there was a co-pilot who, after a routine party, was unable to fly the aircraft on instruments. Fortunately, he did not become an aircraft commander, though he sought this

The 1st Ferrying Air Division being awarded the Red Banner and Order of the Red Banner on February 7, 1945, at Yakutsk aerodrome. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

position. One can imagine such a pilot in the cockpit of a fighter or bomber with one pilot. In 1944, in Yakutsk, a fighter pilot from the 1st Air Regiment, 23 years old, along with a co-pilot, froze their hands and had to have their fists amputated for this reason.

Through four months from the beginning of the work of the air route, an office of the Yakutsk Executive Committee of the *VKPB(b)*, on 3 March 1943, having analyzed the course of ferrying aircraft, noted that an exceptionally difficult situation had been created on the air route. Work for the ferrying of aircraft had developed slowly and had been characterized by a large number of completely intolerable deficiencies—catastrophic accidents [those which involved loss of life] and other accidents, breakdowns, and misfortunes.

The great majority of aircraft that were damaged or destroyed had not reached their destination point. From the time of the organization of the route, 12 aircraft had been written off and 26 were subject to repair. During four months of work, 41 aircraft incidents had occurred and 34 pilots had been killed in catastrophic accidents. The primary causes of incidents were the lack of discipline and negligence of the flight crews, insufficient knowledge of the material components of the aircraft, errors in piloting techniques, and lack of knowledge of weather conditions and the peculiarities of flight conditions in the Far North.

The party executive committee also noted laxity and foolhardiness on the part of the flight crews of the ferrying regiments. Deficiencies were noted in their training and in lack of control on the part of leadership and party workers. The work of technical personnel in servicing aircraft in conditions of exceptionally low air temperatures was weakly organized. All of this, as the executive committee of the party noted, spoke to the careless, irresponsible regard for organization of ferry flights on the part of the route command. The party executive committee required the leadership of the air route and party organizations to immediately set things in order.

In May 1943, after the inspection, an order was issued by the chief of the Main Political Directorate of the *RKKA* [Workers' and Peasants' Red Army] in which the serious deficiencies were noted in the organization of a party-political effort in the division. High demands were announced to the leadership cadre, party organizations, and to all communists. This objective evaluation of the state of affairs had a sobering effect on the entire collective. The command, political workers, and party organizations improved their work, which resulted in the increase of the tempo of ferrying aircraft.

Significant improvement was noted in the work of the regiments by the end of 1943. The numbers attest to this. If in the first half of 1943 one flight incident occurred for 8–9 aircraft transferred on the route, then in the second half it was one for each 17–18 aircraft.

The state of discipline was also somewhat improved. The first half of the year saw 460 disciplinary incidents; in the second half, this number was reduced to 200. Nonetheless, flying incidents were not totally avoided. I witnessed some of them personally and heard about others from direct witnesses. I was able to collect information of this type. Crews of the 8th *TAP* serviced all ferrying aviation regiments and had direct contact with their flight personnel.

Selected Information Regarding Flight Incidents and Personnel Losses of the 1st Red Banner Ferrying Aviation Division

▸ **14 October 1942** – Catastrophic accident of an A-20 aircraft during approach for landing at Markovo. The flight commander from 1st *PAP*, Lieutenant A.D. Novgorodsky, and navigator Captain N.A. Shvedov, perished.

▸ **18 October 1942** – P-40 aircraft went missing in action in the flight sector Uelkal–Seymchan, flown by flight commander, 2nd *PAP*, Junior Lieutenant A.Ye. Fedorenko.

▸ **17 November 1942** – A catastrophic accident involving a Li-2 under control of aircraft commander D.A. Barkov occurred in Krasnoyarsk. Cause undetermined. Conclusions drawn by command of 8th *TAP*, based on suppositions. Fuselage and wings of aircraft believed covered with dense layer of hoar frost, which was not removed before takeoff. The second cited reason was overloading of the aircraft. Many people always accumulated at Krasnoyarsk, waiting forwarding along the route. More careful investigation may have revealed additional causes, but at the time such investigations were not conducted, everything being written off in wartime. Twenty persons perished, including the crew of the Li-2 and aviators of 5th *PAP* who were on board headed for Kirensk.

▸ **5 January 1943** – A C-47 aircraft, commanded by A.A. Kotov, was carrying flight personnel of the 4th Air Regiment from Kirensk to Yakutsk. At Yakutsk, Kotov, having received the landing conditions from the *KDP* dispatcher, mistakenly set a pressure of 29.99 inches instead of the indicated 29.60 inches. Some 300–350 meters from the edge of the landing strip, the aircraft collided with the ground, tearing off the undercarriage and bending the propeller blades. The aircraft landed on its belly. The instrument showed that 80 meters of altitude were still under the aircraft. The crew and passengers were not injured, but the aircraft had to be written off.

I, as a transporter, would not be in a position to analyze and provide an evaluation of the flying accidents of combat aircraft. But the nature of ferrying work differs little from transporters. They both have the same flight profile: take off, gain altitude, horizontal flight, descent, and landing. We all flew along the same route. Our radio navigational and communications equipment were identical. Therefore, the success of execution of flights depended on their effective utilization, which in turn meant the preparation of the flight crews themselves.

▸ **5 February 1943** – This is the date the 7th Ferrying Aviation Regiment was formed under the command of Major I.N. Drozdov. The regiment had the mission to ferry airplanes from Uelkal to Krasnoyarsk, with one crew on "through flights," as they then called them.

The regiment's personnel was of mixed or combined origin; it consisted partially of ferry pilots on temporary duty (TDY) from five of our *PAP*s and ferry pilots sent on TDY from Novikov's group, which was ferrying Il-4 (DB-3F) aircraft from Komsomolsk-on-Amur to the front.

It was secret to no one that when the command of a detachment, group, or subunit suggested that a portion of its pilots be designated to send to another subunit, one attempted to hold the best cadres for oneself and cast off the undistinguished, morally unstable, and young who still have not stood on their own feet. The 7th Ferrying Air Regiment was formed, apparently, on this principle. For the five months of its existence, it presented us with many difficulties: several catastrophic and lesser aircraft accidents, which on the whole occurred during takeoffs and landings. Before my very eyes, Lieutenant Boytsov, during a takeoff in Yakutsk, did not maintain control of the takeoff and his A-20 veered to the right into a hangar under construction. Another pilot, whose name I have forgotten, also in an A-20, did not maintain direction and veered to the left into a C-47 parking area. He chopped off the tail assembly of one of them, skipped into a fuel storage area, and landed on a fuel drum. Incidents such as these occurred at other airfields. As a result, at the end of May, the 7th *PAP* was disbanded and the flight personnel were transferred to the 5th Ferrying Aviation Regiment.

Upon diligent familiarization with the list of those who perished on the route, it becomes obvious that more than half of them occupied command/leadership positions. This speaks to the fact that the majority of flight personnel were not prepared for the execution of the missions assigned to them. In confirmation of the above-stated assertion, I offer several examples.

Several *Duglasisty* crews were delivered to Fairbanks for receipt of C-47 aircraft. However, for unknown reasons, C-47 deliveries to Fairbanks were delayed. I.P. Mazuruk, the commander of 1st *PAD*, was concerned about this situation and suggested to the *GVF* pilots that they instead ferry P-40 Kittyhawk fighters. Of course, his suggestion merited attention, but it had not been thought through sufficiently. A modified, two-seat fighter, which did not exist on the airfield, would be required for

this. It was simply absurd to re-assign a pilot of a heavy aircraft to a fighter and expect the pilot to fly immediately, without a check ride. Pilots from the *GVF* were experienced and understood how this might end. I.P. Mazuruk, knowing the strength of personal example, got in the cockpit of a P-40 fighter and executed a takeoff. The pilots attentively monitored the flight. Mazuruk, having gained altitude, suddenly broke into a left spin. After several revolutions, he brought the aircraft out of the spin and then broke into a right spin. Almost right above the ground, he managed to bring the aircraft out of the spin. He made a landing approach and landed the aircraft. Mazuruk clearly did not want to meet with the pilots after the almost failed "personal example" and, after landing, left for his quarters.

Here is an excerpt from the memoirs of O.I. Chechin, published in the journal *Vokrug sveta* [Around the World], No. 8, 1989, under the headline, "*Za dolgo do vstrechi na Elbe*" [Long before the meeting on the Elbe River].

> *...One more time the life of Pyotr Gamov could have been ended suddenly, when they suggested that he ferry a C-47 loaded with dynamite. This was an urgent mission for the front. Five transport aircraft were carrying the dynamite, but they did not have sufficient crews for five aircraft. Colonel Machin instructed Captain Gamov to deliver the dangerous cargo to Uelkal.*
>
> *The takeoff course from Ladd Field in Fairbanks on that day was 240 degrees—straight toward the Motherland, precisely to the west. The course was customary, but on board the C-47 was the commander of a bomber squadron who, before this, had only flown in the capacity of passenger.*
>
> *Soon after the aircraft had reached altitude, they encountered snow. Visibility was very poor, as the wipers were unable to clean off the snowflakes sticking to the window. Below were mountains, and for some reason their speed was increasing. Something bad was happening with the aircraft, but what exactly that was, Gamov was unable to determine. Suddenly, the aircraft dropped on a wing and began to fall. Dust from an unknown source obscured their eyes. The horizon was upside down—the C-47 was beginning to roll.*
>
> *"Hey, Misha, that's it!" cried out the commander to the regiment flight engineer, Panin, who was sitting next to him—the commander's voice held nothing back."Bring it out!" he said, attempting to smile. "You only have a very little way to the ground."*
>
> *Pyotr Gamov knocked the iced-over window of the cabin with his elbow. He looked down; the aircraft was falling straight into a canyon! The pilot pulled the column to himself with all his might. The aircraft shook, coming out of certain doom, and slowly transitioned to horizontal flight. Gamov again brought the C-47 into the sky along the canyon.*
>
> *After delivery of his hazardous cargo to Uekal, Gamov discerned that it was necessary before takeoff to turn on the pitot tube heater, which indicated the airspeed of the aircraft. The tube had frozen in flight, causing the instrument to give incorrect information.*

▸ **5 March 1943** - In the area of Berdigesta village, 180 kilometers from Yakutsk, an Li-2 under the control of aircraft commander N.P. Chervyakov suffered a catastrophic accident. The commander and co-pilot were killed. According to the words of the flight engineer, M.F. Kolomytkin, both engines failed.

▸ **18 April 1943** - A catastrophic accident occurred with an A-20 piloted by Senior Lieutenant Ya.Ya. Cherednichenko. On the Seymchan-Oymyakon sector of the route, the aircraft deviated to the north some 260 km from the route and fell near the village Sasyr, Momsk *rayon* [region], Yakutia.

At that time, we also were flying from Yakutsk to Seymchan, and I was attentively following the work of the direction finders and Cherednichenko's A-20. I personally tried to call his aircraft, but he did not hear me. We were interested in his flight altitude, because we were flying in overcast and feared that Cherednichenko might be in our flight path. But his radio operator called only Yakutsk, which surprised me. I suspected that he did not have radio data for the direction finding points and beacons. Perhaps the aircraft flew into clouds with snow squalls and therefore had become unable to hear the ground radio stations.

▸ **7 May 1943** - A B-25 aircraft under the control of flight leader Major A.M. Boronenko lost both engines during execution of a takeoff in Yakutsk. The crew of six persons perished. The cause of this fatal accident was not discerned.

▸ **29 May 1943** - On the eastern shore of Krest Inlet, 40 kilometers from Uelkal, a C-47 aircraft suffered a catastrophic accident under the control of aircraft commander Ye.S. Spiridonov. They were flying from Fairbanks to Uelkal with cargo. They had flown in clouds, and began their descent for Uelkal radio beaconing station too early. The aircraft caught the peak of a mountain. During the examination of the accident site from the air, we observed an aircraft externally intact, but with a separated pilots' compartment. The aircraft cargo included two reels of electrical cable weighing 1,000 kg each. From the impact, these reels broke their restraints and rolled forward through the pilots' compartment, smashing in their path the already dead members of the crew and breaking up the aircraft's nose before rolling into the water of the bay (they were not visible on the shore).

▸ **30 May 1943** - Penetrating through the overcast above Uelkal, the C-47 aircraft under the control of Junior Lieutenant P.P. Danilov, on-board technician Lieutenant S.M. Dobkin, and aerial gunner/radio operator Senior Sergeant P.F. Gordienko suffered a catastrophic accident. My information about this crew is very limited. I know it only through 1st Ferrying Aviation Regiment. Evidently Danilov, just like Captain P.P. Gamov (this is my personal supposition), decided to assist 8th *TAP* in ferrying C-47 aircraft, the material components of which he had not studied beforehand. If Gamov was simply lucky in the first flight, then with Danilov and his crew, fate treated them harshly. The causes of the catastrophe are unknown. One can only postulate that Danilov, returning from Fairbanks to Uelkal, had been in the air more than six hours without a co-pilot. He became tired and, while piloting the aircraft, made a mistake, which the crew paid for with their lives. The aircraft dove into the waters of the Bering Sea (Krest Inlet).

▸ **9 June 1943** - A C-47 aircraft crashed on takeoff at Magadan under the control of aircraft commander V.S. Smirnov. Here is the prehistory: The aircraft commander, Klubnichkin, who had just joined the formation, was ferrying the C-47 from Uelkal to Seymchan. He lost orientation and instead of Seymchan was landing at Magadan. During the landing, he broke the elevator control. Klubnichkin was removed from flights and Smirnov's crew was sent to Magadan to repair and ferry the aircraft to Yakutsk. The crew consisted of flight engineer D.I. Uyutnov, on-board radio operator Ye.M. Zalogin, aviation technician Ilin, and aviation mechanic Yu. Zuev.

Then, something irreversible happened: During repair of the elevator, the control cables for the trimmers were re-routed, and before the flight no one confirmed the correctness of their positioning. In other words, an act of unforgiveable criminal negligence was permitted. When the commander gave trimmer during execution of the takeoff to transition the aircraft into gaining altitude, instead it went into a dive. Not able to decipher what was the cause of this behavior of his aircraft, the commander gave more deviation to the trimmers and by doing so increased the diving impulse. Seconds were passing and the mountains were already close, under the nose of the aircraft.

The aircraft commander and on-board radio operator were killed. In his own words, flight engineer D.I. Uyutnov "was sewn together" from the pieces. The aviation technician suffered a broken leg and the aviation mechanic suffered contusions. After recuperation, the flight engineer and aviation mechanic were to be subject to judicial process, but I do not know anything regarding their subsequent fate.

▸ **28 August 1943** – In the foothills of the Ushansky Range, approximately 50 km from Uelkal, another catastrophic accident occurred: a C-47 aircraft under the control of Ye.F. Gerasimov was flying in clouds on the Uelkal radio beacon. Just like Ye.S. Spiridonov, he began his descent too soon and crashed into the mountains. Everyone on board perished.

Our crew had just flown on this aircraft. On 26 August, Zhuravlyov brought his wife and two daughters from Krasnoyarsk. The air regiment commander, V.A. Pushchinsky, had given him five days of leave to get his family settled in and for the crew to rest. Pushchinsky instructed that our aircraft be transferred to Gerasimov's crew for execution of a one-time flight to Uelkal to pick up two Pratt and Whitney engines and deliver them to Yakutsk. On 28 August, we learned of the incident. Our crew, of course, was very sorry, especially for Petya Okonechinkov, with whom we were friends. Alas, they all died of their own fault, having blatantly violated the flight regulations on the route and the division order issued earlier in connection with the deaths of the crew of Ye.S. Spiridonov.

Later, we ferreted out the place where our airplane crashed. The damage was not visible from the air; only the left engine had been knocked off by the collision with the mountain. We made several passes over the aircraft but did not observe any signs of life of the members of the crew.

▸ **6 November 1943** – Our crew was flying from Yakutsk a bit ahead of a group of P-39 fighters. During the overflight of Olyokminsk, on the command radio we heard an alarming conversation between the pilots of Major V.Ya. Alpatov's group. We did not interfere in the conversation in order not to distract the leader. Upon our arrival in Kirensk, we learned the details of the incident.

In the area of the village Mkhtuya, Alpatov's group caught up to a naval Douglas DF transport aircraft. The deputy commander of the air squadron of 4th *PAP*, Major P.F. Morozov, decided to be entertained, that is, to attack the naval Douglas, which was flying below and in front of them. The group leader Major Alpatov, having heard of his intentions on the radio, forbade his breaking the flight formation. Morozov, ignoring the prohibition, together with his wingman, conducted an attack on the naval Douglas. During the pullout from the dive, the two fighters collided. Morozov went down with his aircraft and perished; his wingman managed to bail out and land by parachute.

▸ **25 November 1943** – Some 15–20 kilometers from the site of the death of Gerasimov's crew, the crew of Major F.L. Ponomarenko suffered a catastrophic accident. The aircraft took off from Uelkal, and 11 minutes later, while gaining altitude on course to Markovo, exploded in the air. Pieces of the aircraft were hurled in a radius of one kilometer. The commander of the 8th *TAP*, Lieutenant Colonel V.A. Pushchinsky, went to the site of the catastrophe. Our comrades, wrapped in their parachutes, were carried out on sleds and later delivered to Yakutsk, where they were buried.

Postscript

Veterans of aviation of Yakutia with the leaders of the Yakutsk Directorate of Civil Aviation. Sitting: second from left, V.D. Glazkov, second from right, G.S. Benkunsky, 1985. Courtesy of Ivan Negenblya.

In the museum of the village Seymchan, on the main stand with portraits of the ferry pilots, is inscribed in large letters the phrase "They fought for the Motherland." Those who know the full history of the Great Patriotic War can say that this does not tell the whole story. The 1st *KPAD GVF*, which did not belong to the active army, fought not at the front but labored deep in the rear area, exclusively helping the front, suffering losses, and bringing the Allies closer to our common victory. One for all.

An Artist Sees Alaska

Portraits at a Russian Base[1]

Henry Varnum Poor (1887–1970)
Henry Varnum Poor, an American architect, painter, sculptor, muralist, potter, and writer, served in World War I in 1918 and on the Alaska–Siberia Air Route in 1943 and 1944.

I had heard so many tales of the Russians at the Alaskan base where they took over our planes, that I selected this as my first assignment when our War Art Unit arrived in Alaska. The stories had them supermen—huge fellows, tremendous drinkers, who drank our poor boys under the table, then went off to their planes, did a few loops over the field, and headed for Russia while our pilots were carried off to bed. The place was supposed to swarm with Russian glamour girls, too—Amazons and Venuses in one, who were test pilots and mechanics as well. Altogether, it seemed our boys were up against so much that they were in danger of acquiring real inferiority complexes, and something must be done about it.

The gates to Ladd Army Airfield lie just outside Fairbanks, a town with great character and charm. The quiet, deep Chena River flows through it. When I arrived the second day of June, the air was sweet with the perfume of spring—a strong, waxy smell from the new buds of the aspens. Beautiful soft skies, like those over all great interior lands, carried endlessly drifting white clouds. Along the river, above and below the tall, arched, steel bridge, were the old bars, cafés, and hotels of the town, and farther down were the well-finished, neat little log houses, each in its little yard, where everyone was

[1] Editor's note: This article appeared in *An Artist Sees Alaska*, published by Viking Press in 1945. It has been updated by the editor. Copyright © 1945 by Henry Varnum Poor.

busy in the evening, making gardens and sprinkling the dirt road to keep the dust down against the unaccustomed heavy traffic of army trucks. And across the road was the river, reflecting the incredibly prolonged sunsets and curving off through cottonwoods—much like the Kaw River at my home town in Kansas. There were girls and women about in surprising numbers, well-dressed and with the soft, relaxed air of women at home.

At the gate to the post, the M.P.s insist on seeing, each time, the credentials of officers, as well as the passes of enlisted men. And after driving two or three miles along a graveled road through low spruce and birch woods and open meadow-like tundra, you come to the post itself—one huge silvery hangar, with wide concrete aprons at each end, and stretching east and west beside them, the two-mile-long concrete runway. The post lies in a wide shallow bowl of low hills on three sides, but to the south a low fringe of forest gives a definite sense of the earth curving away to the very distant snowy range of Mount McKinley.[2]

Beside the hangar is the central square of the post, a small city block in size, green with newly sprouted oats, a tall flagpole in the center, and the dozen or so barracks, hospital, and other buildings set with their ends facing the square, radiating from it on the three sides away from the hangar. They are long, two-storied, frame buildings, gleaming white, with roofs irregularly patterned in two shades of cream, as a concession to camouflage. I always wonder who makes these foolish, compromise decisions as to where camouflage shall begin and end—as here: side walls pure white, as though never would an aerial observation be made except from exactly above, whereas oblique shots are always the favorites of the photo-interpreters. Altogether it's a handsomely laid out, well-built, and well-kept place, afloat, as it seems, on this wide-stretching, endless Alaskan tundra.

And the Russians, the saviors of the world, the supermen, so shortly ago "the bears who walked like men," and then "the red hordes of Bolshevism"? Well, whatever they would really turn out to be, they, their presence here, and their country off over the hills to the west, gave point and meaning to this field.

The first two I saw came walking along the concrete sidewalk, and even at first glance were unmistakably Russian, for they wore the loose, belted smock and tight neckband which has always characterized Russian dress. The two young men, both short and not very heavy, were moving with a sort of dipping, swinging, shuffling, and very energetic gait. One wore flaring dark blue trousers tailored tightly in at the knees, and high, black-cuffed boots; the other straight O.D. trousers thrust into high boots. One wore an overseas cap with a Red Star, the other a small visored cap like the old German student caps, and on it a Red Star in a wreath of laurel. The olive-drab blouses of both were made gay by flat white epaulets marked with gold stars and bars and edged with pale blue. Their faces were ruddy and like those of American boys, but minus the ease and softness that a life of peace and security and abundant food has given to our boys. This heightened tension, which made their different types seem more pronounced, was, I found, the one ever-present point of difference between us. Their range of racial type is as wide as ours—dark, light; wide, long; blunt, sharp; tall, short; gay or sober—the same sharp contrasts and differences that characterize the men of our citizen Army, they also had. But *never* the loose-jointed movements and relaxed faces so characteristic of our men. Instead, thick necks, barrel chests, energetic, purposeful,

[2] Denali.

nervous movements. In all their lives they had known only work and revolution and war, and these stamp their faces and their bodies with tension and toughness.

But, even so, if you put them into American uniforms they would be lost in the shuffle of our varied types.

At the little oval bar in the basement of the comfortable B.O.Q. where beer was served, they came to drink and to play the slot machines, which fascinated them. They have the natural shyness and reserve of men in a strange country—but something more: an attitude of reserve by order. I always greeted them, risking a hello, and they either hastily saluted or nodded and smiled, and some even "helloed" back. I wished I knew Russian, for I wanted to stop them and say, "I am proud and moved to meet any member of your gallant Army. Permit me to shake your hand." Perhaps it's just as well I could not. But, even though our conversation never went beyond "Hello" with many, in the course of a few days I was on very cordial drinking and sign-language terms with them.

In the long mess hall where a twenty-four-hour service is maintained because of the necessarily irregular hours of both Russian and American personnel, the Russians sat at the tables on the left and the Americans on the right. Very seldom did any Russian, even one with a little English at his command, sit with the Americans—again, the normal shyness of men in a strange land. I saw more often Americans who knew a little Russian make an attempt at fraternizing.

The first day I spent looking, bumping into Russians everywhere—singly and in groups. They were quartered together in one of the long buildings divided into apartments of four or five large rooms with bath, each room having from two to eight cots—the same accommodations as those of the American officers.

It surprised me that practically none of the Russians spoke English any more than we Americans spoke their language. I remembered in Germany before the war, how almost every schoolboy had some English at his command, and I had expected a limited knowledge of English to be rather common among the Russians, but it was not, and my own complete ignorance of Russian made me ashamed and very conscious of the great barrier which lies in the lack of a common language. A few of the Russians permanently stationed here, the mechanics, testing engineers, and executive staffs, were picking up some English, but it was obvious that all these men had been selected for their ability at their job, not for their English, and all official communication was done through interpreters.

This, I came to feel, was the mark of a proud and self-confident people, perhaps a little too stiff and unyielding, for certainly no careful and studied attempt had been made to ease this language difficulty. It was even clear that their commanding officer, a very stern and conscientious taskmaster, welcomed this detachment. It left everyone free to attend to business with a wholehearted concentration and devotion—the business of rushing planes into Russia as fast as possible, employing as few personnel as possible.

But Americans are very provincial people. Too many of them still feel that if a man does not speak English, he's an ignorant, uncivilized man. One of the Russian interpreters told me with scorn and indignation that a brash American soldier had one day tapped one of the staff officers on the shoulder and said, "Hey, why don't you learn to speak American?" And the Russian officer had replied in perfect English, "I don't need to. We have interpreters for that purpose. But why do you not learn respect for your superior officers?"

In view of the fact that this was probably the only place at that time where our two peoples were in contact, I was sorry that the tensely serious and concentrated Russians did not take a little more advantage in an official way of the chance to be gracious. Before my stay was over, I knew better why they did not, and appreciated the prevailing sternness of mood which made this impossible.

Attached to the Russians were three Russian girl interpreters. Not Amazons nor Venuses, but very serious, good-looking, and quite feminine young women, who were slightly self-conscious and stagy alone among all the men. Attached to the American personnel as interpreters were two young American lieutenants of Polish ancestry, also a big Russian-born sergeant, formerly in the Russian Navy, and a big blunt-featured civilian, looking much like Earl Browder.[3] Fraternizing between our interpreters and the Russians did not go far, in spite of an obvious attempt at it on the part of our interpreters. I felt the Russian smelled the White Russian background of these Polish-American boys.

I asked our interpreters if they would help me get some Russians to come to my room for about an hour to pose for more careful and finished studies than I could make otherwise. "Sure, they'll be

[3] Editor's note: Earl Browder (1891–1973) was the general secretary of the Communist Party USA during the 1930s and early 1940s.

glad to. Who do you want?" I replied that I did not want spectacular or exceptional men. I preferred the average ones. But to my surprise I made no headway at getting models. American boys, though shy and embarrassed at the idea of posing, are still flattered and ready to pose at the drop of a hat. The Russian boys were shy and embarrassed, too, but worried and uncertain, and ended by making excuses. The girl interpreters exhibited the same reluctance, and finally said they would have to get permission from the commanding officer. When I realized how strictly under orders they felt themselves to be, even in such informal matters, I presented myself to their commanding officer, Colonel M— [Colonel A.G. Melnikov]. He was a small extremely serious, and rather dour fellow, dressed with extreme simplicity. He wore no insignia whatever on his blouse, never the gay epaulets, the return of which to the present-day army uniform had not been welcomed by the strait-laced party members. Through my interpreters I explained that I would like to make studies of a lot of his men, including himself, that I felt their being here, at this base on American soil, and as our allies, was a vastly momentous and historic thing, and that I wanted to make these studies as part of the permanent record of our Army. I don't know how eloquent the big civilian interpreter was. One has a peculiarly helpless feeling as one listens to a pet idea being explained through disinterested interpreter, this explanation complicated through being made in the wash of air and roar of motors from a big bomber near by. At any rate, the idea didn't at all appeal to Colonel M—. For himself, he refused, saying he had posed for a lot of photographs and nothing had come of it. But, for his men, he rather grudgingly consented and said he would send them over whenever he could spare them.

They were all working so continuously and under such tension, and the Russian pilots arrived and departed so rapidly, that I felt this was concession enough for such a nonessential thing as drawing. So I thanked him and returned to hovering around the field and watching in wonder the flood of magnificent planes arriving from "the States," each with its blood-red star already painted on the fuselage, and immediately checked and tested by alert and deadly serious Russian engineers. There was feverish activity on the field, a tremendous roaring of motors as a large convoy was getting ready to take off. The Russian pilots climbed into the planes after a last check up. The medium bombers, one after another, with a final racing of the motors, left the neat and exact line-up along the apron, taxied down to the end of the runway, and took off, the first ones circling the field until the last one should join them. Then the half-dozen P-39s, their bellies swollen with the detachable, auxiliary gas tanks they carried to enable them to make the flight with the bombers, took off, one after another. And all together they moved into tight formation and disappeared over the western hills.

The endless roar of motors being tested is the nervous sound accompaniment in the background of all life and activity at the post. In this endless daylight work went on unbrokenly twenty-four hours a day. If at twelve o'clock midnight with the bright glow of sunset in my room I put myself to bed, then at two or three or four o'clock such a roar of motors would fill the air that I would jump to the window to see a convoy of planes gathering in the brilliant light of the sun, now in its upward arc along the northern horizon. Never have I seen such skies, or had such a sense of a blue world of space around the curving top of the whirling earth. Worlds and infinities of clouds, gathering and shifting and drifting off—the weather breeder for the whole hemisphere lying to the south.

One of the Russian girls, Helena [Elena Makarova], was my first formal model. I felt that she, speaking English, would report back about this strange business of drawing, and as to what were my real intentions, so I explained to her that I wanted to do these careful studies because I did not want the Russians to be seen just as types. I wanted them to be seen and known and loved as individuals, because their sacrifices had been so great that we in America almost forgot that every dead Russian was a person like ourselves—loved life just as dearly, had just as many ties of parents, wives, and children. Helena listened very soberly, nodded, and said, "Yes, we have paid very, very dearly for everything we have done."

Elena Makarova

She was from northern Russia, a graduate of the Moscow School of Languages, and was very happy to speak English on subjects other than technical ones. "You know," she said, "I spoke better English when I graduated from school than I do now. Now I only speak of propellers and magnetos and batteries and guns. It must be a wonderful life to be an artist. I wish I could see New York."

"Well, maybe you can go there while you're here," I said.

"No," she answered. "Not 'til the war is won."

So we worked and talked for an hour and a half, and I had great pleasure in drawing this fine, serious face with its soft eyes, the mouth and cheeks showing such definite Mongolian and peasant stock. She was very pleased with herself in the drawing and at once wanted it.—"Oh, please."

Russian mechanic

"No, I can't," I said, "but I'll do another for you."

"But you'll forget. You Americans make such easy promises," she protested.

I promised word of honor I would draw her whenever she could come again, and Helena said she would come that same night after she was through at the hangar.

In the afternoon she returned with a young engineer and remained long enough to ease him over his first embarrassment, until presently he began to drag out his few words of English. He was too embarrassed over the sight of himself on paper to do more than laugh. "You Russian?" he asked me on parting. "You look Russian."

In the evening, Helena came back, and I did a drawing of her. We had another pleasant talk—about life in Russia, about Dostoevsky's novel *The Possessed*, about the Russian love of the opera. Here at the post their chief entertainment was the playing of endless operatic records on their phonographs. She told me about some of the pilots who had died here, but she was very reserved and reluctant to talk of anything verging on politics.

The following morning, she came with a genial, talkative master mechanic whom the Americans called "Butch." He examined with a very critical eye the drawings I had made. Seeing this, I asked Helena to tell him that I would try my best to make him very handsome. At this he blushed scarlet. All the men blushed easily, were much more shy and impulsive than the girls. Also, I discovered they all used perfume—lots of it.

Thenceforth, Helena brought me wonderful models, and I was happy. Pilots were hardest to get to pose as they stayed so short a time. Often they would arrive—twenty or so piling out of a big transport in from the west—and take off again within a few hours. If they had a chance, they would go to Fairbanks and buy lavishly—shoes, women's silk underthings, stockings, and such luxuries, probably commissions from many friends. The pilots were of all types, and of a much wider range in age than our pilots. Only one was bearded—he was a Cossack—and when Helena asked him to pose, he said an artist in Moscow had wanted him to pose and he had consented and, after all, the artist did not show up—so I was glad not to put him through such a strain again and only sketched him at mess. The Russian pilots are dressy, as our pilots are inclined to be, and wear all the hardware they can—pistols on their hips, and some the Red Star of Lenin [Order of the Red Star or Order of Lenin] on the breast. They are a leather-loving people. They wear high boots and wide leather belts and shoulder straps, and I wondered at the abundance of leather in a country so stripped down to essentials. In flying, they are skillful but abrupt and rather unorthodox. Instead of circling the air over the field when gathering into convoys, they would cut dangerously across—natural habits from combat flying. But every plane the Russians fly out has been flown in by an American pilot on its maiden flight, too. These same easygoing American boys, who look so soft compared to the Russians, take at least a fifty-fifty chance, and they have a better record of delivering the planes safely, which is their job.[4]

One Sunday afternoon, a P-39, after circling the field, left its convoy, tried to land again, but plunged into the river, which flows by only one hundred yards from the end of the runway. The pilot, a twenty-year-old Russian boy, and one of their best, had radioed that his oil pressure was dropping.

Wrecking trucks and crews, cables, rubber boats, all were rushed to the river, and the personnel of the field, both Russian and American, gathered on the bank. The plane was located just under the surface in the middle of the swift icy current. Several attempts by our crews to get a cable around the plane were bungled through too much hurry, and the Russians, gathered in a knot, looked on glumly and critically. There were so many failures, and so much time went by, that their tension relaxed into ironic mirth, and Colonel M— offered some impatient suggestions, which were received, however, with more courtesy than they were given.

At last, the wingless, torn fuselage was drawn to shore, the tail heaved up like a whale; and in the transparent nose, crushed against the instrument panel, was the pilot. American boys in the icy water to their necks pulled the body out—dead from a crushed skull.

[4] Editor's note: *Time* magazine described Soviet combat pilots as follows: "The vast majority of the flyers are of peasant stock straight from the soil; they fly with confidence and verve. They seem mostly older and bulkier than U.S. pilots, show little youthful exuberance, do not regard themselves as glamour boys. By training and indoctrination, they are serious-minded men with serious jobs to do. They are not reckless in the sense of deliberately courting danger, but they are not surrounded by so many safety regulations and devices as U.S. airmen. Their attitude, in effect, is that danger is something to be avoided, but not if you are in a hurry or preoccupied by something else. Some observers say that they fly their planes 'like the Cossacks ride their horses.' They seem to be able to fly any number of missions without visible fatigue. Few of them have heard of such fancy flyers' ailments as psychoneurosis." "World Battlefronts," July 31, 1944, vol. XLIV, no. 5, p. 19.

American mechanic

In everybody's mind, like a specter, was the thought of sabotage, or at least indifference and carelessness. This plane had just been conditioned by American mechanics and checked by Russian inspectors. If there had been any doubt of its performance, an American test pilot would have been called upon to take it up. But tension is inherent in such a situation and, like envy, does not grow out of logic. For a while, this heightened tension hung over the field, but planes came in and convoys left for the west even into a black and stormy sky.

I thought how on an average Sunday afternoon back in the States probably five hundred equally serious automobile accidents occur, but do not check the flow of Sunday traffic, and that in war, death is made much of, while deaths incidental to industry and traffic far outnumbered those of war and still unnoticed. I realized with horror how, at a certain pace, war *could* become a particularly permanent way of life, and still life would go on, as it has in China. I believe, from what I have seen of the reaction of our soldiers to death, that we are more indifferent to it than the Russians. They face it with more personal sentiment—we are more as a detached phenomenon—and I believe that in war, the horror of death, of planned and deliberate death, grows instead of diminishes.

One evening in the mess hall, I was much interested in the unusual sight of a table full of women on the Russian side of the room. They had the air of hard-working, pioneer people, dressed in their unaccustomed and awkwardly worn shoddy best. My first thought was that they must be from some remote town up the Yukon. Then I was struck by a prevailing Slavic quality in their faces and realized they were Russian. At the next table were the men of this party, with the same air of serious workmen—with knobby heads, fresh and bad haircuts, and cheap shoddy clothes. They were an embassy party en route to Mexico. They all ate with typical European peasant table manners—that is, spread their elbows wide on the table and lowered their heads to the plate, instead of the erect sitting with much manipulation of tableware which we call table manners. Observing them, two things became very clear to me. One—how completely their whole national wealth of industry and materials and concentration was turned to the war; the other—to what an astonishing degree they had brought about and were living in a people's and workmen's world. Not one among these civilians was of the so-called intellectual or aristocratic type. But every face had intelligence, alertness, and the great gift of complete and serious purpose.

I realized now why no more concessions were made to fraternizing and graciousness and the planned promotion of good will at this post. They are a very simple, very honest nation of workers who, up to the time of their stand against Germany, were very unsure of themselves, and very much snubbed and patronized by other nations. Now they are proud and self-conscious, and who can blame them if they carry a chip on their shoulder. We Americans should know that it will not take long for these workmen to become intellectuals and aristocrats, since there are no physical characteristics that distinguish these different categories—and real aristocracy simply lies in intelligent sureness and self-confidence.

They have a rich background in their history and art and literature, which they have not thrown away by any means, but they also have the eager and formative character of people starting fresh again. They are disciplined—there is no doubt of that—with a discipline that has bitten deeply into their naturally impulsive, hearty, and careless temperament. They are devoted to work and progress with religious zeal, and our own mechanics have admitted that their mechanics are as good as ours.

They have grown impatient of our past easy promises—they interpreted those phrases literally which we have come to take as statements of our good intentions. They are conscious that they have paid heavily in blood and that we, comparatively, have paid in money. This is one of those things that cannot be helped—we would feel exactly as they do if fate had put us through their ordeals.

The attempt in some places to build them into the bogy of "our next enemy" makes my blood run cold. In all my contacts with them I felt their likeness to us as a people—as individuals surprisingly like us, as a people very close to us in the problems they face, and in the aspiration with which they face those problems. And I felt very keenly the immense responsibility of our leaders and their leaders, to promote good will and understanding and tolerance between our two vigorous, mixed, and hybrid peoples who face the future with such high hope.

One for All and All for One

Lessons of the Alaska–Siberia Air Route

Alexander B. Dolitsky
President
Alaska–Siberia Research Center
Juneau, Alaska

One of the decisive factors leading to the victory of the world's peace-seeking nations in the Second World War was the effective cooperation of the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition. Today, after the passage of more than 70 years, it is vital once again to recall this unique episode, when the Allied countries, despite sharply divergent governing structures and ideologies, managed to reach agreement on a shared global imperative—to present a unified front against the powers that promulgated fascism and militarism.

The wartime Lend-Lease Agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, signed in Washington, D.C., on June 11, 1942, allowed the two countries to provide mutual assistance in fighting a war against aggression. One of the unique examples of such cooperation was the establishment of the Alaska-Siberia Air Route (ALSIB), on which approximately 8,000 combat and transport aircraft were delivered from the United States of America to the Soviet–German warfronts between September 1942 and October 1945.

Soviet and American pilots flew the Alaska-Siberia Air Route to deliver combat planes half way around the world, traversing more than 12 time zones, from Great Falls, Montana, to the Russian warfronts. Much of the route lay over remote and roadless wilderness where pilots made their way in stages from the safety of one hastily built airfield to the next. Alaska served as the exchange location for transferring the planes to the Soviet Union. United States Army Air Corps pilots from the 7th Ferrying Group and Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) flew combat planes from their points of manufacture in the U.S. to Great Falls, Montana, where male pilots of the 7th Ferrying Group flew

Wm. H. Shippen, Jr.

Pipe Line TO RUSSIA

'Cobras Flying the Northern Route to Soviet Battlefronts Blaze Air Trails for Future Commerce.
by W. H. SHIPPEN, JR., Aviation Editor, The Washington Star

Thousands of fighters and bombers flying to Russia through Alaska are blazing an important air route for future commerce.

This military "pipe line," developed in secret for almost two years, may help to win the peace as well as the war by opening our land bridge to Asia to profitable, two-way traffic.

At busy terminals in Alaska, Joe Stalin's boys are getting acquainted with Yankee engineers and technicians, and with the ferry pilots who deliver slugging Airacobras, and their successors, the Kingcobras, along with A-20 attack bombers, hard-hitting B-25s, and reliable two-engined transports.

The Joes from across the Bering Sea and the Yankees talk the same language—sign language, that is. Everybody understood when a big Soviet ace clasped the nose of a new P-63 Kingcobra in his arms, and began to stroke the projecting 37mm cannon. When he spoke a few endearments, the interpreter scarcely had to translate:

"Nize baby. Plenty hot baby—the hitlerites will love you, no? We have plenty of girls back home, but not nize babies like you. We will get along good together."

Another pilot fresh from the front gave a 'Cobra such an exuberant burst of throttle on the take-off that an American service man said to the interpreter: "Tell him the engine won't last long with all that throttle."

"He says," the interpreter replied, "he may not last long either."

Since September, 1942, the Air Transport Command of the AAF has delivered nearly 5,000 fighters, bombers and transports to the Russians in Alaska. The work of the Alaskan Wing, under command of Brigadier General Dale V. Gaffney, is almost unknown to the general public because of military security restrictions.

New planes are fed into Great Falls, Montana, and ferried north to Ladd Field at Fairbanks. There they are checked over and accepted by the Russians, who fly them to Nome, across the Bering Sea and down through Siberia to the Russo-german front.

When the Russians last spring were preparing a great offensive timed with the Allied landings across the Channel, more than 360 fully-equipped fighting planes were delivered to Alaska in the month of April alone.

At Ladd Field and at the ATC base at Nome, the men of the two services eat in the same messes, frequent the same post exchanges, attend the same movies, receive treatment in the same hospital wards, and strive with more or less success to learn each other's language.

On Red Army Day, February 23, the Russians entertain, and on American Army Day, April 6, the Americans reciprocate, but not with vodka.

With Russian cooperation, experts say, land routes could branch out through Siberia to Asia and the Rich East Indies. Long hops over the Pacific would be avoided. Winter conditions are no more difficult, pilots say, than those on the Chicago-Seattle route, flown the year round on regular night and day schedules.

The route to Alaska was recommended by a joint United States and Canadian defense commission in November, 1940.

The Canadians began to build fields from Edmonton, present ATC wing headquarters, northward toward Alaska, with Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, as a major base between Edmonton and Fairbanks. Transport time between Great Falls and Nome is now about 17 hours. Construction of the route was speeded when the japs struck at Pearl Harbor, and again when they hit Dutch Harbor in June, 1942.

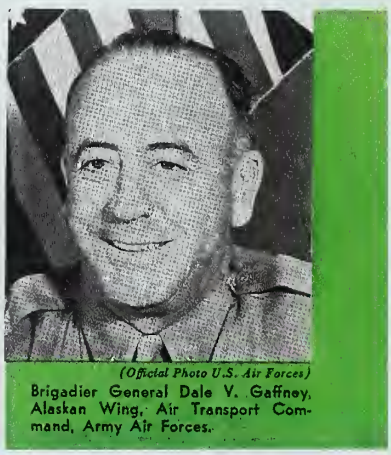
Planes for Russia were being shipped by boat, especially much-needed fighters. Longer-range types were flown by the long South Atlantic route across Africa and the Middle East to Persian Gulf points.

The distance from Great Falls to Moscow is 7,900 miles. From Miami to Moscow via the Persian Gulf is 13,200 miles. The potential saving in time, fuel, number of ferry pilots required, and wear and tear on engines was obvious.

When an agreement was reached with the Soviet two years ago to deliver planes over the new route, Colonel Alva J. Harvey, one of the ATC's leading round-the-world pilots, took off for Moscow to work out details.

A few weeks later a camouflaged Russian transport and an American-built B-25, both bearing the Red Star of Russia, crossed from Siberia and landed at Fairbanks with the first Russian military mission to Alaska.

General Gaffney, then in command of Ladd Field, had gone north in 1940 to found the AAF Cold Weather Test Detachment. Lessons learned by this unit and by colleagues at Wright Field helped to keep lend-lease planes on the wing winter and summer.



(Official Photo U.S. Air Forces)
Brigadier General Dale V. Gaffney, Alaskan Wing, Air Transport Command, Army Air Forces.

"Pipe Line to Russia," Bellringer *magazine, a publication of the Bell Aircraft Company in Buffalo, N.Y. October, 1944. Courtesy of the Niagara Aerospace Museum collection, Niagara Falls, N.Y., via Ilya Grinberg.*

them across Canada to Ladd Army Airfield, now Fort Wainwright, near Fairbanks, Alaska. From there, pilots of the USSR's Air Force flew the planes over western Alaska and across Siberia to the warfronts. Due to severe weather conditions, mechanical problems, and other adverse circumstances, 133 of these airplanes crashed in North America and 44 went down in Siberia along the Alaska-Siberia Air Route. During their time of service, 38 WASPs died and many more were wounded in the line of duty in the United States while delivering planes to Great Falls.[1]

In the process of transferring aircraft in Alaska, Soviets and Americans got acquainted, and many became sincere friends, carrying on in friendship for the rest of their lives what had begun as a purely strategic alliance. The friendship and cooperation between the two nations during this period of history is now little remembered in the wake of 45 years of ill will fostered during the Cold War (1946 to 1991), and recent resurging tensions between Russia and the United States. Yet, in many ways, our two countries continue to rediscover the benefits of mutual cooperation, as the rebuilding of economic and social bridges continues. Today, therefore, it is important to remind Alaskans and other peace-seeking citizens of the U.S. Lend-Lease Program and Soviet-American war cooperation of the 1940s. Beyond the achievement of victory in World War II, the Alaska-Siberia Lend-Lease Program established a tradition of cooperation across the Bering Strait that continues to this day in the form of various intergovernmental agreements, including the Shared Beringian Heritage Program of the U.S. National Park Service, and numerous ongoing people-to-people cultural and economic exchanges.

Who is Stronger...? *Ladd Army Airfield, Fairbanks, Alaska, 1943. Courtesy of* Alaska Post, *Vol. 1, No. 27, p. 10.*

[1] Miriam J. Lancaster, "Women Aviators During World War II and on the Alaska-Siberia Airway," in Dolitsky, *Allies in Wartime*, p. 83.

At the present time, both in Russia and the United States, much research has been conducted and many documentary films, books, scholarly works, and popular articles have been released that shed light on the U.S. Lend-Lease Program, including the unique Alaska–Siberia Air Route, which was unprecedented in world history prior to World War II and has not been duplicated since. Without a doubt, the program played a vital part in the defeat of Nazi Germany and its Axis powers. The architects of the hallmark Lend-Lease Agreement and Protocols, including creators of the ALSIB Air Route, deserve modern-day accolades, as do the American and Russian veterans who risked their lives to ensure the Lend-Lease deliveries were completed.

In a letter dated March 22, 2001, to U.S. Senators Ted Stevens and Frank Murkowski in support of the construction of the WWII Alaska–Siberia Lend-Lease Memorial in Fairbanks, Stanley B. Gwizdak, Jr., then Acting Chairman of the Interior Veteran's Coalition of Alaska, wrote:

> *It is important, I believe, for the Russian and American people to recall and to celebrate a common heroic effort in combating a treacherous enemy during a daunting and terrible time when the outcome of that war was very much in doubt for both of us. This was not just the effort of Armies, Navies and Air Forces, but also the entire mobilization of both nations industrially, politically and spiritually. Our group still has those who remember this war and we are proud to endorse the Fairbanks memorial as well as all others.*

Master of Ceremony John Binkley (right) and Program Manager Alexander Dolitsky (left) acknowledge distinguished guests at the WWII Alaska-Siberia Lend-Lease Memorial dedication, Fairbanks, Alaska, August 27th, 2006. Defense Dept. photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. D. Myles Cullen.

The heroism of American and Soviet pilots who flew Lend-Lease combat aircraft from the United States to the Soviet Union during World War II, and of all who participated in this endeavor, will always be remembered. The present edition, *Pipeline to Russia: The Alaska–Siberia Air Route in World War II*, seeks to honor veterans of the war on both sides of the Bering Sea and rekindle interest in the historic connections between the peoples of Alaska and Russia.

At this turbulent time, humanity is waiting for the next ALSIB-like war cooperation and unity among peace-seeking nations, standing together against brutal aggressors and terrorist organizations. Indeed, we can use another "ALSIB" as a global alliance against terrorism!

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Selected Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations Relevant to the Missions of Soviet and U.S. Armed Forces in WWII

A-20	twin-engine attack/light bomber, manufactured by Douglas Aircraft, used in multiple roles (ground attack, reconnaissance, surface and torpedo attack) by Soviet Army and Navy Air Forces
AAB	Army Air Base
AAF	Army Air Force
AC	Air Corps
ACFC	Air Corps Ferry Command
ADC	Alaska Defense Command
ADD	*Aviatsiya Dalnego Deystviya* (long-range air arm)
AFB	Air Force Base
AGL	above ground level
ALCAN	original name for the Alaska Highway built in 1942 via NW Canada
ALSIB	acronym for the ALaska-SIBeria airway to the Soviet Union via Montana, Canada, Alaska, and Siberia
Ant	Antonov, Soviet aircraft designer
AR	Army Regulation
ASC	Air Service Command
ATC	Air Transport Command
AWOL	absent without leave
B-25	Twin-engine bomber, known as the "Mitchell," manufactured by North American Aviation and employed by the Soviet Air Force as a long-range level bomber
BARBAROSSA	Code name for the German invasion of the USSR
BAZAAR	Code name for the American survey of air facilities in Siberia. Also the name for the plan to provide American air force assistance to the USSR in the Pacific theater
BOQ	bachelor officer quarters
Boston	British designation for the A-20
C-47	twin-engine military transport version of the DC-3
CAVU	ceiling and visibility unlimited
CFR	contact flight rules
CG	commanding general
CO	commanding officer

CWT	Cold Weather Test
Dalstroy	Powerful organization in the Northeastern territories of the USSR that conducted construction operations using predominantly convict labor
DB-7	early version of the A-20
DC-3	commercial designation of the C-47
DSS	Division of Soviet Supply
FEA	Foreign Economic Administration
FC	Ferry Command
FDR	Franklin Delano Roosevelt
Flt. Eng.	flight engineer
F/O	flight officer
FORM 1	airplane log
GF	Great Falls, Montana
GKO	*Gosudarstvenny Komitet Oborony* (State Defense Committee)
GPK	*giropolukompas* (gyrocompass)
GU GVF	*Glavnoye Upravleniye Grazhdanskogo Vozdushnogo Flota* (Main Directorate of the Civil Air Fleet)
GULAG	*Glavnoye Upravleniye Lagerey* (Main Camp Administration), centralized bureaucratic structure responsible for Stalin's labor camps. In English, often used to refer to a single prison camp
GUSMP	*Glavnoye upravleniye Severnogo morskogo puti* (Main Directorate of the Northern Sea Route)
GVF	*Grazhdanskiy Vozdushnyy Flot* (Civil Air Fleet)
HQ	headquarters
IAS	indicated air speed
IFR	instrument flight rules
IFF	identification, friend or foe
Il	Ilyushin, Soviet aircraft designer
KDP	*Kommandno–dispetcherskiy punkt* (command–dispatcher point)
KPAD	*Krasno-znamyonnaya peregonochnaya aviatsionnaya divisiya* (Red Banner Ferrying Aviation Division)
KVT	*Krasnoyarskaya vozdushnaya trassa* (Krasnoyarsk air route)
Kittyhawk	British name for the late model series of the P-40
La	Lavochkin, Soviet aircraft designer
LaGG	Lavochkin, Gorbunov, and Gudkov, Soviet aircraft designers
Li	Lisunov, Soviet aircraft designer
MD/LC	Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
MAON	*Moskovskaya aviagruppa osobogo naznacheniya* (Moscow Special Purpose Air Group)

MiG	Mikoyan and Gurevich, Soviet aircraft designers
NKVD	*Narodny Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del* (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) – Soviet internal police associated with secret service; Stalin's internal police
NA	National Archives
NDB	non-directional beacon; radio navigation during WWII used the ADF or automatic direction finder; the needle of this navigational aid always pointed to the NDB
NR	Northern Route
NWSR	Northwestern Staging Route
OTU	operational training unit
PAP	*Peregonochnyy Aviatsionnyy Polk* (ferrying aviation regiment)
P-39	single-engine fighter known as the Airacobra, manufactured by Bell Aircraft Corporation and employed as a fighter-interceptor
P-40	single-engine fighter known as the Kittyhawk and Tomahawk, manufactured by Curtiss, employed by the Soviet Army and Naval Air Forces as fighter-interceptor; later consigned to national air defense forces
P-47	single-engine (radial) fighter-bomber, known as the Thunderbolt, manufactured by Republic Aviation, shipped to USSR in limited number (no known record of use in combat)
P-63	single-engine fighter known as the KingCobra, manufactured by Bell Aircraft Corporation, delivered in large numbers (no known employment in WW II by Soviet Air Force)
PAD	*Peregonochnaya Aviatsionnaya Divisiya* (ferrying aviation division)
Pe	Petlyakov, Soviet aircraft designer
Pe-2	Soviet twin-engine medium bomber
PS	*passazhirskiy samolyot* (passenger aircraft, e.g., PS-84)
PSP	pierced steel planking, also known as Marsden Matting, supplied through Lend-Lease to the USSR for rapid construction of takeoff and landing strips
Recon	reconnaissance
RKKA	*Rabochye-Krestyanskaya Krasnaya Armiya* (Workers' and Peasants' Red Army)
RON	remain over night
SAF	Soviet Air Force (Russian *VVS*)
SCD	State Committee of Defense (Russian *GKO*)
Shturmovik	name for the Il-2 ground attack aircraft, of which 37,000 were manufactured during the war
ShVRS	*Shirokoveshchatelnaya radiostantsiya* (wide-band radio station)
SNAFU	situation normal, all fouled up
SNK	*Sovyet narodnykh kommissarov* (council of people's commissars), essentially Stalin's cabinet
SPC	Soviet Purchasing Commission
SPU	*samolyotnoye peregovornoye ustroystvo* (aircraft inter-communications system)

S&R, SAR	search and rescue
TAE	*Transportnaya Aviatsionnaya Eskadriliya* (air transport squadron)
TAP	*Transportnyy Aviatsionnyy Polk* (air transport regiment)
Tayga	boreal forest
Tomahawk	British name applied to the A, B, and C models of the P-40
TM	technical manual
TsK VKP (b)	*Tsentralnyy komitet Vsesoyuznoy kommunisticheskoy partii (bolshevikov)*—Central committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)
TsRU	*Tsentralnoye razvedyvatelnoye upravleniye* (Central Intelligence Agency)
TT	*Tokarev, Tula* (pistol of Tokarev design, manufactured in Tula)
Tu	Tupolev, Soviet aircraft designer
UBT	*Universalnyy Berezina Turelnyy* (Berezin universal ring-mounted, a 12.7mm [.50 caliber] heavy machine gun used by Soviet air forces during WW II)
UK	United Kingdom
UPA	*Upravleniye polyarnoy aviatsii* (Directorate of Polar Aviation)
USAF/HA	United States Air Force Historical Archives
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UVD	*upravleniye vozdushnym dvizheniyem* (Directorate for Air Movement)
Variometer	instrument that shows rate of climb or descent
VFP	*Vsemirnaya Federatsiya Profsoyuzov* (All-World Federation of Trade Unions)
VFR	visual flight rules
VHF	very high frequency
VPP	*vzlyotno-posadochnaya polosa* (takeoff–landing strip)
VTsSPS	*Vsesoyuznyy Tsentralnyy Sovet Professionalnykh Soyuzov* (All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions)
VVS	*Voenno-vozdushnyye sily* (Soviet Air Force)
Wehrmacht	German Armed Forces of World War II
WWIRB	World War I Records Branch. This section is now combined with the World War II Records Division and called the Modern Military Records Division of the National Archives
Yak	Yakovlev, Soviet aircraft designer
UVGKU	*Upravleniye vozdushnoy trassy Krasnoyarsk–Uelkal* (Directorate of the Krasnoyarsk-Uelkal Air Route)
YuZGU	*Yugo-Zapadnoye geologicheskoye upravleniye* (Southwest geological directorate)

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FLARE

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Pipeline To Russia: The Alaska-
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Home Front to Battlefields

The Alaska-Siberia Air Route

Between 1939 and 1945, in this "worst of times," 55 million people died violent deaths; the majority among them died not as soldiers-in-arms but as defenseless civilians. Yet, it was also the "best of times," when many countries of the world rallied against the ultimate rogue states, Germany and Japan, and when German Nazism and Japanese militarism suffered total defeat.

The United States' Lend-Lease program contributed greatly to the victory of World War II. The materiel transferred from the United States to the Soviet Union between 1941–45 was indeed staggering: it included, among other items, nearly 15,000 airplanes, 7,000 tanks, 51,000 jeeps, 376,000 trucks, 132,000 machine guns, 4.5 million tons of food, 107 million tons of cotton, and more than 15 million pairs of army boots.

During World War II, Fairbanks was a key node for the transfer of nearly 8,000 warplanes from the United States to the Russian battlefields via the Alaska–Siberia (ALSIB) Air Route. In the three years of the route's existence, thousands of Americans worked with Soviet personnel on the cooperative program. From 1942–45, the Alaska–Siberia Lend-Lease operations demonstrated that two nations could set aside differing views, cultural values, and ideologies to achieve a common, mutually beneficial goal—to defeat Nazi Germany and its Axis partners.

The heroism and dedication of the Soviet and American participants of the Alaska–Siberia Airway will not be forgotten. It is our civic duty to express our deep respect to the ALSIB participants. Future generations should be brought up with a respectful spirit of patriotism to understand this history of cooperation between our countries. This edition will preserve awareness of that massive effort for all time.

— Alexander B. Dolitsky